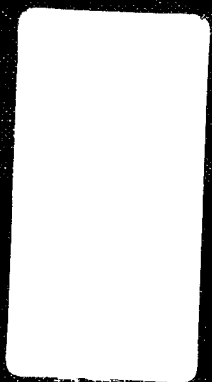


THE  
GENTLEMEN  
ADVENTURE

OR  
THE  
GENTLEMEN



BY  
J. STEWART

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Presented by

Mrs. J. E. McKenzie

*To*  
KATHRENE





## INTRODUCTION

Ordinary history conveys information ; extraordinary history conveys understanding. The understanding must, of course, be based on information, which is why the industry of chroniclers is so valuable.

Unfortunately the capacity to understand is none too common. Its place is too often taken by personal prejudice, for or against. The result then is what we might call an historical legend. We are not particular enough in our examination of sources to distinguish between those that are genuinely such, and those that but repeat an error merely because it is to be found in early print. Thus one quotes from the other in long succession, each repetition lending its strength, until at last the legend has taken the solidity of indisputable fact.

To trace the pedigree of accepted incident, point of view, or personal evaluation is fascinating business ; and very laborious. One can never be satisfied merely with finding a quotable "authority." It is necessary further to enquire where the authority got his stuff. If he is an erudite authority properly addicted to footnotes or appendices, that is easy : but if he is merely a discursive authority we must cast our net through all of antedating literature that might have a remote connection with the subject. It is not sufficient to confine ourselves merely to the historical section. Many an early chronicler, with a nice discrimination for the picturesque, has lifted an incident from pure fiction where-with to render more sprightly his dullness ; and if he has been an early enough chronicler to rate the title of "source," has been quoted there-*anent* with confidence by all who come after.

That is how a very great deal of history has been written, and that is why the body of history offers such a wide field of exploration and reappraisal. It was originally charted in the grand old manner, with pictures of dolphins and strange beasts and spouting whales, and exotic islands and treasure coves, and reefs and

rocks with mermaids combing their hair. These were wonderful seas upon which to embark in fancy. But when we set forth in sober earnest we were very likely to find ourselves groping in a fog of illusion and bewilderment. It is the business of the modern scientific historian to cease copying from the old maps and to do a little first hand surveying. But when he has returned and has mapped his findings, it is astounding, and a little disconcerting to see how often PD. and ED.—Position Doubtful and Existence Doubtful—will speckle his new chart! But navigation has become safe.

Mr. Pinkerton has done just this service for us in his present volume on the Hudson's Bay Company. The historical legend in this case has been peculiarly fantastic. People like things to be picturesque, they like things to be romantic, they like to see a drama unfold. Here were all the elements. The Stuarts of England were a peculiarly weak, dissipated, selfish, corrupt lot of monarchs. They were almost a total loss to their people while they were in power; a scandal to morals; wholly absorbed by their personal pleasures and vices. But they were picturesque. They wore plumed hats and laces and dress swords; and they wore them with an air. They must have had that illusive quality known as personality. As a consequence, even to-day, otherwise sensible Scotsmen weep in their drinks as they sing to Bonnie Prince Charley. It was a harsh, hard time, and undoubtedly the Stuarts symbolized in a way hidden desires. One of these Stuarts, needing more money,—as he always needed money—, and desiring to hand over a little graft to a small group of favorites, as was his habit when it cost him nothing personally, chartered to them the third of a continent. He gave them the whole thing, lock, stock and barrel, together with the most unheard of and extraordinary powers, including that of making war and the power of life and death. He did this without thought or investigation; without statesmanship; without regard to future developments; merely to oblige boon companions and to get them, and him, what money might be in it. These boon companions adopted a name. There is a great deal in a name, as any real estate promoter will tell you. It was "The Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay."

Thus we have a picturesque king and a picturesque name. It catches at the modern imagination. Adventurers of England! But unfortunately, as Mr. Pinkerton tells us, an adventurer of those days was merely one who adventured money. And mighty little of that, in the case of Charles Stuart's boon companions. We find the noblest of the noble lords conveniently omitting the payments for his stock; the less noble planking down merely one installment. Only when we come across such a name as "John Portman, citizen and goldsmith," may we surmise the legend "paid in full."

For one hundred and fifty years this company of Adventurers of England managed to scrabble along. As might be expected the record is not a brilliant one. In fact quite the contrary. Its policy was flabby and supine; its enterprise was almost nil; its rivals, laboring under tremendous natural disadvantages, defeated it with almost ridiculous ease; its servants, with a few exceptions, were incompetent or venal. Those few of its field men who displayed genuine enterprise, and who did individually accomplish great things, it discredited, thrust aside, or disgraced. But it did pay dividends; most of the time; it could not help it.

Then, in the latter part of the eighteenth century, it had the good luck to run against a fiercely enterprising rival, the North West Company. The Nor'Westers licked the Gentlemen Adventurers, licked them good and plenty. To all intents and purposes they took them over,—and with them the charter and the name.

From that time the history of the Company presents an astonishing contrast to the first hundred and fifty years of its existence. Why not? It was a different Company,—except for the charter and the name. It has shown the world an example of efficiency, of justice, of loyalty and of enterprise almost unique in human affairs, a record to cherish, to be proud of. All that has fired the popular imagination of romance and high enterprise has been true. The Company, as a Company, has full and abundant right to its pride and its jealousy of its good name.

Thus we have two pedigrees to the present organization: one that might be described as the purely mechanical, tracing by name and the original charter; the other spiritual, beginning with the infusion of new blood into the old inert body. Unfortunately for

history those responsible for the Company chose the former. To them it seemed important to extend the legend backwards through the one hundred and fifty inept years ; to persuade the world that the same hardihood, efficiency and loyalty that distinguished its servants since the eighteen-twenties had obtained in unbroken succession since the days of Charles himself. It seems to us a foolish choice. It was a difficult one. Successfully to establish it some men's reputations must be blackened, others unjustly enhanced ; a policy of secrecy must be rigidly maintained ; *ex parte* history must be written. These things were done, and so successfully that Radisson's name has become synonymous with treachery ; the stupid and inefficient and reactionary commanders of the tidewater posts exalted to a picturesque overlordship ; records have been closed to research, or released in such partial form as suited the impression desired ; threats of libel or suppression directed at those who have written down a picture different than the Company's desired conception of itself.

This is rather a pity. The truth is more creditable than this laboriously built up fiction. That its later spiritual composition was able to overcome the effects of the century and a half of dry rot is itself an achievement fit to rank with its servants' widest explorations. It should be emphasized rather than suppressed.

Mr. Pinkerton has, in the present volume, done just this ; and in a masterly manner. It must have been a job well worth while to him. Certainly it will be so to his readers. His narrative has to me the absorbing interest of the best fiction. From the reconstruction of his research not only do Radisson, Groseillers, Kelsey and Hearne, and the stout sea captains gain their proper precedences over the "stuffed shirts" of the sedulously cultivated legend ; but the Company's development is taken from the never-never land of *opéra bouffe* into the perspective that for the first time reveals its genuine greatness. For this his public cannot fail to be grateful. Nor, in my opinion, is the Company itself less beholden.

STEWART EDWARD WHITE.

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**HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY**





## CHAPTER I

Men began writing about the Hudson's Bay Company two and a half centuries ago, have been writing ever since, and the subject of these millions of words remains essentially unknown, a dim and distorted figure stalking through the fringes of history.

The reasons for this obscurity are several, the causes obvious. The pity is that the detailed foundation of a spirit of loyalty and service unknown in the life of any other commercial enterprise has slipped, unchronicled, into the past.

That spirit was as pure as patriotism. It often attained the fanaticism of religious devotion. It was largely instrumental in perfecting an organization that functioned with amazing precision and efficiency through five thousand miles of wilderness. And the very integrity of that spirit was partly responsible for the oblivion which has engulfed it.

Much that has been written about the Hudson's Bay Company has been in attack upon it, and probably contains less truth than any other. Much that has been written in the Company's favor is so obviously partial it arouses immediate distrust. Fiction, especially in the United States, has used the Company freely, and with a ridiculous lack of knowledge. Rumors have grown from nothing to accepted fact. Racial prejudice, commercial jealousy, political enmity, the inevitable disgruntled employee, and that secrecy which has always been an inherent characteristic of the fur trade, all these have contributed to the coloring and distortion that formed public opinion.

Two hundred and sixty-three years is a long time—it was in 1668 that the first ship entered Hudson Bay to trade for furs—and the last two and a half centuries span history's most convulsive period. They embrace the divine right of kings and constitutional monarchies, witchcraft and free schools, grease-daubed velvet and dry-cleaned tweeds, diplomatic trickery of the basest

sort and a sense of national honor and integrity, anonymous pamphleteering and a free speech and press.

History was not a thing of exactness and truth. Swift and De-Foe, small boys when the Hudson's Bay Company received its charter, had pens to sell. The 'smugly moral writers of the nineteenth century preached and did not delve, and always the glamour of velvet and gold lace and the bigotry of national boasting barred the admission of truth.

Out of this welter has risen, in the popular mind, a vague conception of what the Hudson's Bay Company was and is. Fiction, rumor, bias and secrecy have built up pictures of plume-hatted and velvet-clad "Gentlemen Adventurers" landing on the shores of the northern sea and trading inconsequential trinkets for costly furs, of a grim monster holding undisputed sway over a vast empire through two centuries, of Indians robbed and oppressed, of white "free traders" poaching ineffectually in the forbidden forests, of enormous dividends since its inception, of a great, soulless corporation throttling opposition and holding back hordes of land-hungry settlers.

None of this is true. Nor is there much truth in extravagant counter claims of the Company's vast service to the Empire. It performed the service, but while engaged in its single purpose of getting fur. It served in holding Canada for Great Britain, and tried to add Washington, Oregon and California and much of Alaska, but because it needed all that land in its business. Unselfish devotion to one's country appears too often in history, after the result is achieved.

To the Hudson's Bay Company has been ascribed monopoly of the grinding, feudal sort, and in the two centuries during which legal monopoly existed there were only forty-nine years when monopoly was a fact. In the remaining century and a half the exclusive possession of a third of North America, accorded it by royal decree, was openly and constantly and successfully defied.

To the Company has been ascribed adventure and romance. Did not Charles himself designate it as "The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson's Bay"? But in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to "adventure" was to furnish money for trade in foreign lands. The "Adventur-

ers of England" remained at home and hired others, at twenty pounds per year, to engage in the adventure, as we now understand the word, of sailing to an unknown land and trading for furs with savage races.

To the Hudson's Bay Company has been ascribed oppression of the Indians, and the Crees about Hudson Bay had a name for it which means "that to which we owe thanks." The Ojibwa's title for a district manager, the chief factor of the old days, is the same he gives to George V. For a hundred years a hundred thousand Indians accepted the word of a Hudson's Bay man as a sacred bond, and a Hudson's Bay man looked upon his promise to an Indian as an obligation to be met at any cost.

The whole story of the Hudson's Bay Company is one of contradictions, of bulldog persistency and flabby inaction, of stress on unimportant features and disregard for deep-rooted essentials. It is foolish to condemn or defend, as most writers on the subject have done, but it is absorbing to follow the Company as it wallowed through the century and a half in which it believed it was great before it achieved the monopoly it claimed or the greatness it imagined.

And greatness came, not through the English "Adventurers," who always remained in London, but through the Scotch traders from Montreal, who themselves went into the wilderness and learned the situation at first hand. "For keen, hard, shrewd efficiency perhaps the most terribly effective organization that had ever arisen in the New World," the Nor'Westers were the men who introduced first-hand adventure and romance in the British fur trade, who first pushed that trade down the Mackenzie to the Arctic, out into the vast prairies of Canada, across the Rockies into British Columbia and Washington and Oregon, and whose scheme of organization and methods and men brought to the Hudson's Bay Company its first taste of supremacy one hundred and fifty years after the granting of the charter.

This is heresy. For some understandable reason, the Hudson's Bay Company must persist through history, and in the imagination, as in integer, an ever-expanding, ever-successful enterprise of the "Adventurers of England." It must rise with unbroken lineage from the pen of Charles II. One should look upon

its chief officers today as if they were blood descendants of Prince Rupert.

The Company's pride is like that of race and of family. It is a pride peculiar to England and English institutions, and as such has become arrogant and intolerant, and eager to forget. As is so often the case, it ignores utterly that of which it should be most proud.

No attempt is made in this volume to give a detailed history of the Hudson's Bay Company. Such a task is monumental. Alluring by-paths are infinite. Matters of bitter controversy, racial, commercial and political, would require volumes.

Nor is this altogether an attempt to tell merely a brief story of the world's oldest living commercial organization and sketch in vivid color the most significant events and characters of two and a half centuries of romantic and adventurous drama.

An effort will be made to gain a truer perspective of circumstance and actor, but most of all to suggest something of that amazing loyalty and devotion of the Company's servants which sprouted a little more than a century ago.

No other commercial organization has anything that approaches it. Only a few nations, hard pressed by powerful foes, have produced a patriotism that excels it. Only religious sects have aroused a more fanatical devotion. Out of the bias and greed and inefficiency of the early days of the Company, this pure, beautiful essence has sprung, a monument, not to commercial success or the false gods that have been established through sycophant annals and the smug complacency of counting house and board room, but to the efforts of lonely men in far places to maintain an ideal.

They were the adventurers of the Hudson's Bay Company, those men who spread the fur trade across a continent and up into the Arctic. Theirs was a spirit of allegiance never known in the London headquarters. Theirs were lives of solitude and of sacrifice, of fidelity that did not swerve when they were betrayed across the seas. To them the Hudson's Bay Company was not a thing of charters and dividends but a living religion, a family circle, a brotherhood of service.

## CHAPTER II

Conditions and incidents attending the birth of the Hudson's Bay Company are inconceivable today. They were normal then, natural products of the morals and political theory of the period. Charles II signed his name at the bottom of the last of five huge sheets of parchment, a third of the North American continent became the property of eighteen men, and there was no public protest or concern.

For several centuries the kings and queens of England had been making similar grants. The coat of arms of the Hudson's Bay Company bears a striking resemblance to that of "The Merchant Adventurers of England," who received the first of such royal charters in 1296. Antlered stags were substituted for winged horses, unimaginative beaver for lions gardant, and an England reveling in the return of royalty to power found nothing at fault.

The Stuarts, in the person of Charles II, had been restored to the throne ten years earlier. Nell Gwyn and Moll Davis were providing Samuel Pepys with diary fodder, Lady Castlemaine's power was ebbing and Louise de Keroualle was appearing as the last of the famous mistresses. The House of Commons had already tried to curb the king's extravagance. Charles repudiated his debts to the goldsmiths. The theory of divine right was having its last fling. Charters to the favored few were not only air-tight legally but wholly in accordance with precedent and the spirit of the times.

The Russia Company had been in existence more than a hundred years, the Eastland and Turkey grants almost as long. The East India Company was seventy years old when the Hudson's Bay Company was born. Elizabeth gave Virginia to Walter Raleigh in 1584. The London, Plymouth, Massachusetts Bay and other American Companies received grants of territory the length of the Atlantic seaboard.

Charles I not only presented Maryland to Lord Baltimore but conferred upon him the right to bestow titles. When the father of William Penn died in 1670, Charles II owed him several thousand pounds, and ten years later it had not been paid to the son. The king then suggested to Penn that he accept an American grant for a receipt in full, and in 1681 Penn agreed. Penn fancied the name of "Sylvania," and Charles' satirical wit prompted the insertion of the prefix. Thus Pennsylvania purchased trinkets for Nell Gwyn.

Charles II deeded New York to his brother. The same Duke of York, afterward James II, was head of the third Guinea Company, to which Charles gave a charter in 1662 on condition it supply the West Indian sugar plantations with slaves from Africa.

These are a few of the long list. Among them, the Hudson's Bay monopoly, granted to Prince Rupert, cousin of Charles, and his friends, passed almost without remark. An unknown, sub-arctic land peopled only by red savages could not compete in interest or commercial importance with the barbaric splendor and wealth of the East. Tiny ships loaded with knives, hatchets, beads and looking-glasses scuttled into the north while the majestic East Indiamen sailed in splendor. Kings ruled. People had not sensed their full rights.

Today, of all the famous chartered companies, the Hudson's Bay alone exists. It is wealthier, bigger and more important than ever before in its history, and undoubtedly will survive while present political and sociological systems prevail. But it is no longer simply a fur trading enterprise, and as owner of department stores, steamships, huge areas of farm lands, mineral and oil rights, sealing and fish packing branches, it loses our interest. The glory of the Hudson's Bay Company arose from its undivided purpose, its romance from the unsung efforts of humble servants. We are not concerned with the adventure of what now may be called the General Motors of Canada.

There is no disputing the fact that England's sea-mindedness, her chartered companies and the popular pastime of claiming everything in sight was responsible for the establishment of the British Empire in all parts of the world. But historians err when they argue backward from that premise and ascribe high moral

and patriotic purposes to those who received royal favors and embarked upon conquest.

Much of this has been done with the Hudson's Bay Company as a subject. Canada is British today largely because of the Company, and, had the Company's efforts prevailed, Washington and Oregon, and probably California, would not be within the borders of the United States. It must be remembered, however, that British territory meant fur trade monopoly for a strong, aggressive concern that was reaching out for every pelt it could find. There is no reason to suppose that time's golden haze endows commercial enterprises of the past with high purpose and patriotic devotion unknown today.

This is one of the reasons why the splendid spiritual development of the Company in Canada, its remarkable contribution to the world's all too slender fund of pure loyalty, has been so grievously slighted. The lace and velvet and gold brocade of the members of Charles' dissolute court caught history's eye, and wool-shirted heroes toiled unseen across a continent.

History has always been dazzled thus. Columbus was given added glory because of Isabella's patronage. Prince Rupert, lacking interest to remain through a business meeting of the Company of which he was governor, has a huge empire bear his name, while Radisson and Groseillers, who suffered unbelievable hardships in discovering that empire and making the Hudson's Bay Company possible, are not even mentioned in an authoritative English work on chartered concerns.

Romance clings to lace and velvet, despite its lack of adequate dining implements, dry cleaning and bathing. We like to think of the bluff mariner kneeling before a gracious sovereign and receiving the royal blessing before sailing into unknown seas. We thrill to the thought of such a stimulus to dare all for king and country. Here is William McFee's picture of one such intrepid navigator, exalted by the prospect of discovery, as he was about to make the first attempt to find the Northwest Passage:

"Frobisher, standing still at the center of this sudden whirl of interest, had it borne in upon him at length that from Queen (Elizabeth) to cabin boy the main reason for his voyage was neither the charting of the Polar Seas, the passage to Cathay, nor

the development of nautical science; but quite simply the bringing in of cargoes of metallic gold . . . Gold beyond the dreams of avarice. It was a sudden revelation of the substructure of the Elizabethan era."<sup>1</sup>

There is no reason to believe that conditions were vastly improved in the reign of Charles II, and yet the statement is constantly made that the Hudson's Bay Company's inception was largely due to the laudable effort to find the Northwest Passage. The Company's charter itself says so:

"Whereas our dear and entirely beloved Cousin, Prince Rupert"—here follow the names of the other seventeen—"have, at their own great Cost and Charges, undertaken an expedition for Hudson's Bay, in the Northwest parts of America, for the discovery of a new passage into the South Sea, and for the finding of some trade for furs, minerals and other considerable commodities," etc.

The Cambridge History of the British Empire says: "Meanwhile, individuals had shown that English spirit had not decayed. In 1668-9 two explorers, Radisson and Groseillers, employed for the time by Prince Rupert, with Gillam of Boston as their navigator, renewed the old quest for the Northwest Passage, and during the search for it around Hudson Bay established the post of Fort Charles." It continues with the statement that the granting of the charter was "primarily for the discovery of a passage to the South Seas."

Radisson and Groseillers sailed with no thought in their heads but fur, and this was a principle adopted from the first by the company. No effort was made in that first voyage to find the Northwest Passage. In the Hudson's Bay Company's own book, published on the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the granting of the charter, is this statement: "For many years after the commencement of the Company, it made no great efforts at exploring its territory. Its main business was the fur trade."

In reply to attacks in the eighteenth century, the Company did not claim to have made any attempt to discover the passage until forty-nine years after the charter was granted.

<sup>1</sup> From *Sir Martin Frobisher*, by William McFee, John Lane The Bodley Head Limited, London, England.



Perhaps Charles II was prompted by his humor to insert that clause relative to discovery. It hardly seems probable that he was listening to the rumblings which resulted in the bill of rights nineteen years later and wished to tickle the public's interest in a short and easy route to China. In any event, no one, least of all the Company, interested himself in the subject for half a century. As in Frobisher's voyage, it was gold that was wanted.

The Hudson's Bay Company was born in the last days of divine right in England but was conceived in that hotbed of the theory across the Channel. Louis XIV was king. "*L' état c'est moi.*" He had the wisdom to find advantages in a foothold on the St. Lawrence, and the very rottenness of his political machine lost him a great slice of the North American continent. French courtiers plundered two of the most daring explorers in the new world of a large sum, and Radisson and Groseillers were driven to England with their scheme of tapping the huge fur land of the interior by the comparatively easy route through Hudson Strait into "The Bay of the North."

Velvet and lace triumphed over buckskin, and truth bowed to tinsel. History called Radisson traitor and turncoat. Nineteenth century writers imposed their ideas of morality upon the conduct of an individual who was the victim of a political system permitting infinite unscrupulousness. James II and the Duke of Marlborough are proclaimed great and noble governors of the Hudson's Bay Company. James, after losing his throne, became Louis' dupe in trying to establish French supremacy in Ireland as a step to the conquest of England. Marlborough, aiding the corruption that overthrew James by betraying his king, is the man who, as head of England's armies, received several thousand pounds each year from Sir Solomon Medina in payment for secret information. And they call Radisson traitor!

Against the background of his times and beside the royal and noble sponsors of his fur trade schemes, the explorer shines. At least he had courage of a high order, a vision and a purpose. A Frenchman, he switched to England, back to France, again to England. A great part of his life had been spent in the wilderness. His contacts in France were with the special privilege enthusiasts

of Louis' court. Charles II and Louis were signing secret treaties. European diplomacy was pure trickery, spying and betrayal.

Radisson was the first white man to find the upper Mississippi. He was first to pass the forest area and see buffalo on the plains. His journal indicates he was in the Missouri country. Men still argue as to whether he reached Hudson Bay from Lake Superior. His journal says he did, he undoubtedly was close to it, and he certainly learned where it was and proved that the easiest and shortest way to the beaver empire was by salt water.

This last gave to the Hudson's Bay Company an advantage which enabled it to exist against the more daring and enterprising French traders and to keep its head barely above water when the astounding energy of those thunderbolts of the fur trade, the Scotch Nor'Westers, carried the struggle into the very backyard of the English and established supremacy in the center of that vast territory given by Charles as the exclusive property of the "Gentlemen Adventurers."

Yet Radisson was forced to sue the Hudson's Bay Company in 1694 in an effort to compel it to pay him the salary agreed upon. The justice of his claim is indicated by the court's decision against a concern that nestled beneath the throne. While the bribe-taking, king-betraying Marlborough was head of the Hudson's Bay Company, Radisson was in disfavor as a traitor and unreliable servant. Two hundred and twenty-five guineas were paid to the imported Dutch monarch, William III, in 1690 as dividend on three hundred pounds of stock credited to the throne.

In 1700 Radisson, an old man, probably broken in health by the hardships of his early life, asked the Company to give him the job of warehouse-keeper, and was refused.

There is no particular reason to denounce the Hudson's Bay Company for ingratitude. The enthusiast, the man with a vision, is always showing wealth the way and then dropping into obscurity. The injustice lies in the fawning attitude of so-called historians the world over. Writers who are dazzled by velvet and lace cannot be expected to find virtue beneath a buckskin shirt. The same historical spirit that made heroes of the men who kicked the tea into Boston Harbor clothes the satellites of a corrupt court in romance and ignores the obscure pioneer.

John Drinkwater, in beginning his "Mr. Charles, King of England," says: "To write a political biography of Charles II would be to write the history of Europe during a period of fifty years so riddled by intrigue and so confused in their currents that in many respects they have remained beyond the elucidation of the shrewdest chroniclers."<sup>1</sup>

The seeds of England's greatness sprouted not because of her rulers but in spite of them. Back of it all is recognizable a purpose, an undefinable something that grew blindly and blunderingly. The history of the Hudson's Bay Company is startlingly similar to that of the nation. It blundered and bullied and hung on against appalling adversity, and it survived and achieved greatness not because of the Ruperts and Jameses and Marlboroughs but because of a clear flame that burst forth in brilliance only after a century and a half.

And as servile chronicling has misinterpreted the era of the Stuarts, so has it distorted the early life of a Company hatched beneath the throne. Radisson is not alone. There are similar instances of the injustice of obscurity. Some is buried too deeply ever to be brought to light. Radisson's name will always be tarnished. But he should not be maligned when standing with Marlborough and those who came with and after Charles II.

The pity is that an organization which has earned an honorable and enviable record should be so zealous of glory it cannot admit mistakes or share its wealth of accomplishment.

<sup>1</sup> From *Mr. Charles, King of England*, by John Drinkwater.



### CHAPTER III

As the Hudson's Bay Company became great only when it became Scotch, so its very inception was due, not to an Englishman, but to a Frenchman. And in the life of that Frenchman was more romance and adventure than entered into the combined lives of all the "Adventurers of England."

For two hundred years Pierre Esprit Radisson was the scapegoat of Canadian annals. He was called renegade, traitor and liar. Upon him was poured the hatred and contumely of those bigoted writers of the nineteenth century who succeeded in presenting national vanity and racial bitterness as history. The discussion that raged over him through so many generations was as puerile as it was bitter. It placed a stain on Radisson's name which may never be completely removed.

Nothing done by Marquette, La Salle or Joliet compares with the achievements of Radisson. As prejudice dies and the scientifically cold methods of modern history prevail, the man is lifted to a position no lower than that of any explorer on the North American continent. None risked more. None achieved more. And none displayed so completely the qualities and exploits of the ideal adventurous hero.

As Radisson ran the gauntlet of the Iroquois, so he romped through the gamut of romantic hazards and events. Fiction cannot match him. Into his life were crowded incidents more exciting and blood-curdling than any presented by James Fenimore Cooper or accorded to Diamond Dick. His was the great drama of those few who have been first in strange places. He forced his will upon chiefs of Indian tribes that had never seen white men, he convinced an English king of his integrity, and his enthusiasm swept cautious merchants of an alien land into the formation of one of the world's most famous commercial enterprises.

Tragedy kept pace with drama in Radisson's life. He was a victim of the graft and treachery of his own people in New France.

He became a dupe of the rottenness of the court of Louis XIV, and he passed into history as a traitor because that same scheming monarch had a secret treaty with England. He was forgotten by the men he had enriched. He died, and there is no record of his death.

And then, after nearly two centuries and by a turn of fate comparable to those found in extravagant mystery stories, the truth about Radisson emerged. The prize chatterer of London possessed the only copy of Radisson's autobiography. When Samuel Pepys died, a vast amount of documents and letters in his house was purchased by shop keepers *for use as waste paper*. Many years later, Radisson's own story, together with other papers, was rescued and found its way into the Bodleian library. But it remained for the Prince Society of Boston to publish it for the first time in 1885.

Radisson's character had been too firmly established in the minds of historians and public to permit anything except a violent attack upon his journal. Men who had called him traitor and renegade now termed him a preposterous liar, and his statements were held up to ridicule.

The first part of Radisson's Relations is divided into four "Voyages," each the story of a journey westward from Three Rivers. It was written in English, a language with which the explorer was unfamiliar, and the reason for writing it was to interest Charles II in a fur trading expedition to Hudson Bay. It succeeded in its purpose, was probably turned over to the Admiralty for reference, and thence came into the possession of Pepys, who for a time was secretary to the Admiralty.

No sketch of Radisson's features is known, nor has there survived a description of his physical characteristics. The scant references made in his time occur in state papers, the Jesuit Relations, Hudson's Bay Company minutes and the writings of two or three contemporaries. Nowhere is there anything to give a clew to the man's nature, his moods or his peculiarities, even of the qualities necessary for his achievements.

Thus, to understand Radisson, we must depend upon his own account of his life, and therein is a quality that compels recognition despite the tortured English and strange spelling. Perhaps it

was this quality that first won admiration, that caused doubts of the accepted picture of the man, that finally started delvers to checking his story.

This delving began just before the opening of the twentieth century, nearly two hundred years after Radisson's death. To Benjamin Sulte, Dr. N. E. Dionne, Dr. George Bryce and Lawrence J. Burpee, all Canadians, is due most of the credit for the vindication of Radisson, but it remained for a woman to arouse the ire of critics with a more widespread defense of the explorer.

Agnes C. Laut believes what she believes and brings to her writing a passion and an intensity that are wanting in the colder analysis of the pure historian. She not only helped to establish the truth of Radisson's Relations by checking with contemporary writings of Jesuits and other Frenchmen but she revealed much of his latter life through unearthing archives of the Hudson's Bay Company.

And to her is due the credit for discovering the real reason back of Radisson's "crowning treachery," his second desertion of France for England, a fact which even his warmest admirers had been unable to explain. Radisson deserted France, not because he wished to, but because he was ordered to do so by his king, Louis XIV. "And this reason, as a man of honor, he could not reveal in his journals," writes Miss Laut.

More romance! More drama! After two hundred years, the French explorer finds an ardent champion in a fiery little woman who began her writing career in Winnipeg, out past the edge of those prairies which he was the first white man to behold. It would be only in accord with the many dramatic twists in the story of Radisson's life if proof were to be unearthed that the explorer camped one night where Winnipeg now stands. It is wholly possible, and highly probable, that he passed within sight of it.

The work of the modern historian was not received with enthusiasm even in the United States. Marquette, La Salle, Nicolet and Joliet were heroes in the Middle West. Wisconsin, Illinois and Minnesota had named cities and universities and avenues for them, and it was not pleasant to be told that another had been

first to reach the Mississippi and had even penetrated to the plains beyond and north to Hudson's Bay.

Nor are we straying a long way from the story of the Hudson's Bay Company when we speak of Nicolet Avenue in Minneapolis, for example. A big section of Minnesota was part of Rupert's Land, was owned outright by the "Gentlemen Adventurers." Radisson, far more than the other explorers, left his mark to the present day. It is in the entire and widespread significance of his life that the whole North American continent, as well as the Hudson's Bay Company, is concerned. For Radisson, a Frenchman, was primarily instrumental in making America a land of English-speaking people.

That we may perhaps understand something of this man, we will look into his boyhood. The incidents of his first "voyage" have nothing to do with the story of the Hudson's Bay Company. They do explain Radisson and detail the foundation of his career in the wilderness, may give the reader an idea of the young Frenchman's character.

Pierre Esprit Radisson was born in France, according to his own statement in 1636. He came to New France fifteen years later, his family settling in Three Rivers, on the north bank of the St. Lawrence between Montreal and Quebec.

At that time the English held New England, the Dutch New York, the French the St. Lawrence and such country to the west as they could maintain against the Iroquois. Jean Nicolet, in 1634, before Radisson's birth, had ascended the Ottawa, crossed to Lake Huron and coasted to the head of Green Bay, on Lake Michigan. A Jesuit, Jogues, had been at Saulte Ste. Marie.

To the west of the French stretched an unknown continent. Men had no idea of its extent. Hopes for a Northwest Passage produced many reports of the Sea of the South, or the Pacific, only a little way beyond. For a century and a half that sea was always to be, no matter how far men went, "only a little beyond."

The sea of the North was known. Hudson and others had been there. French and English were aware of the conquests of Spain in the southwest but had no idea of the vast land which now comprises most of the United States and Canada.

When Radisson arrived at Three Rivers the Iroquois were

pressing the French back into the town. The Algonquin Indians were unable to come down with their furs to trade. Men dared work the farms near the stockaded forts only under guard. The Iroquois lurked in the forest fringing the settlement.

Could there be a better setting for a reckless young hero? In 1652, when he was scarcely seventeen years old, Radisson and two other boys decided to go hunting. They were warned of danger but insisted on departing. They soon met a man who said he had seen Indians in the forest, and Radisson's companions became afraid and retreated. Radisson went on until, nine miles from the fort, he found a stream he could not ford.

He turned back. He had not seen an Indian. He had shot more geese and ducks than he could carry. When he was within sight of the church in Three Rivers he probably laughed exultantly over the success of his first excursion into the wilderness. And then he stumbled on the naked, scalped and hacked bodies of his two companions of the morning.

Iroquois heads popped up all around him. When they fired, he fired back, and it was perhaps this act of courage in the face of overwhelming odds, together with the subsequent actions of one so young, that saved his life. That first night the savages untied his bonds, combed his hair and gave him special food. He slept under the same blanket with two braves.

Here the French boy enters upon the melodramatic phase of his career. He was taken down into what is now central New York, winning the admiration of the Iroquois as he went, until he was stripped free to run the gauntlet unharmed and then was cared for by a captive Huron woman, who begged, and was granted, his life by the council. He was taken into the tribe, adopted by the Huron woman's husband, a famous chief, given a gun, permitted to go where he wished.

The chance to escape came unexpectedly. While Radisson was hunting with three warriors, an Algonquin slave was encountered in the woods. He suggested to Radisson that they kill the Iroquois in their sleep, but the French boy refused. In the night he was wakened by the Algonquin, a hatchet was placed in his hands, and he was shoved toward a sleeping Indian. As the Indian sprang up, Radisson struck him. The Algonquin killed the other two,



scalped all three and threw the bodies into the river. With Radisson, he embarked in a canoe.

Fourteen days and nights of flight brought them within sight of Three Rivers. The scalps lay in the canoe. But in paddling across the river toward the town they were seen by the Iroquois and pursued. They threw out the scalps, and the scalps floated, to be picked up by the pursuers.

That told the story. A volley killed the Algonquin and sank the canoe. Radisson was jerked from the water, beaten and bound, taken back to the Iroquois country. As his captors started, other Iroquois joined them with two French prisoners, one white woman and seventeen Hurons.

The subsequent events do not make pleasant reading. Radisson's account accords with the terrible incidents in the Jesuit Relations. The prisoners were half dead when they reached the Iroquois village and then subjected to tortures that Radisson describes in detail.

Again his adopted family came to his rescue, but he was now the slayer of Iroquois and for two days he was subjected to fiendish tortures and saw his companions thrown into a big fire. A council was held, impassioned speeches were made, and at last Radisson was set free. His feet had been placed in a fire and for a month he could not walk.

His courage during the two days of horror had won the hearts of the Iroquois. They could not do enough for him, and when the following spring came he accompanied a raiding expedition to the shores of Lake Ontario, past Niagara and to the northwest.

The next year, so firmly had Radisson been established, he was taken to Albany, outpost of the Dutch, where a soldier caught a glimpse of white skin beneath the war paint. The soldier was French and spoke to Radisson in his own language, and when the Dutch learned the young warrior was a white man they offered to ransom him. Radisson refused and returned to the Iroquois encampment.

But the sight of white men had proved too disturbing. Two weeks later he walked out of the village and started to run, and he ran all day and all night and until late the next afternoon, when he came to the first Dutch cabin. A guard took him to the

fort and the Dutch kept him concealed while the Iroquois hunted for him. Later he got down to Manhattan, whence he sailed to Amsterdam, and thence to France.

His first voyage is only sketched here. It is filled with incidents that surpass the wildest fiction, and there is a modesty and a frankness in his writing that compels belief. Later, in his further exploits, the writings of other Frenchmen of his time corroborate him, even in details.

Once in France, Radisson thought only of getting back to America and sailed at once on a fishing vessel, arriving in Three Rivers to find a truce had been arranged with the Iroquois. For a time Radisson remained on the St. Lawrence and then, in 1657, began his second "voyage." This is too long and intricate a story for relation here. Tragedy and horror and courage and cunning crowd the telling of it, and in the end Radisson's elaborate ruse saved the French colony at Onondaga. Parkman told that story before Radisson's *Relations* were published, and his sources confirm Radisson.

When Radisson was first captured by the Iroquois, the husband of his sister, Marguerite, was killed by the savages near Three Rivers. Later she married Medard Chouart Groseillers, whose name will always be linked with that of Radisson.

Groseillers was older than Radisson and had already been west with the Jesuits. He was in Green Bay, and there is even a question as to whether he may not have reached Minnesota. In any event, the French had already heard stories of tribes west of the Mississippi and when Groseillers suggested an exploring and trading expedition, Radisson was at once enthusiastic.

Together these two set out, Pierre Esprit Radisson and Medard Chouart Groseillers, in 1658, and in two journeys in the next six years they were to discover the interior of a vast continent and penetrate northward to Hudson's Bay. Twice they were to return not only with unprecedented achievements as explorers but with military laurels won in savage warfare and with vast quantities of fur which they alone, of all Frenchmen, were able to run past the Iroquois to the ships in salt water.

And they were to be rewarded in the end with robbery of a fortune at the hands of the greedy, grafting favorites of Louis XIV.

They and their discoveries were to be ignored when they carried their case to France. They laid a vast empire at their monarch's feet. They told him of a way to a fortune in beaver skins, and they were laughed at for their pains.

The English had scant part in the fur trade. They occupied New England, a strip of the shore. The French barred the way to the immediate wealth of the traffic in pelts and to what was destined to be the richest and happiest land in the world. A bit of honesty might have saved all that for France.

But Radisson and Groseillers were driven to England, where they made possible the Hudson's Bay Company, and from that mean and then insignificant beginning in the far north the English eventually spread to the Pacific and derived the incentive to force the French from the St. Lawrence.

## CHAPTER IV

The story of the Hudson's Bay Company is so absorbing, and its ramifications are so numerous, there is constant enticement to loiter in the by-paths.

No phase of the Company's annals is more alluring, and none has been the subject of more feeling, than the part contributed by Pierre Esprit Radisson. It leaps from inhuman tortures in the Iroquois villages to the reckless extravagance of the courts of Charles II and Louis XIV, from the exaltation of being first among strange people in strange lands to the ignominy which is so often the fate of an explorer when commerce has wrung him dry.

There is a particular temptation to accompany Radisson on his third journey, when, with Groseillers, he went to the Mississippi and beyond, probably to the Missouri, and on his fourth "voyage," which took the explorers to Hudson Bay. The story of these two expeditions is in itself intensely dramatic.

Imagine being the first white man to cross what is now Wisconsin, to find the Mississippi, the great plains to the west, the huge forests of western Ontario, to coast about Lake Superior, to go on to the prairies of Manitoba! Think of being the first to find great bands of Sioux warriors and show them the wonders of firearms and steel needles. Consider passing through that immense forested swamp to the north and reaching that huge inland sea of Hudson Bay, "where we finde an old howse all demolished and battered wth bouletts."

That "old howse" could have been built by no one except Henry Hudson in 1610. Hudson, too, finding no sympathy and no opportunity in his native land, sailed westward for the Dutch, and found Hudson River and lasting honor. The Frenchmen who found Hudson's house were driven from their own people and found ignominy.

And it is interesting to note that a few years after Radisson's arrival at the Bay, when the first post of the Hudson's Bay Com-

pany was established in North America, it was erected "upon the ruins of a House which had been built there above sixty Years before by the English."

But these excursions, though enticing, take us too far afield. It is with the results of the two journeys of Radisson and Groseillers that we are concerned. They returned from the first with a rich store of furs, and because no other trader, and no Indian, had been able to get past the Iroquois, the French ships were not empty when they sailed for home.

Now, for the first time, they encountered the greed and treachery of the court of Louis XIV. First, another expedition was sent out from Quebec by the governor of New France in an effort to thwart them in being first to Hudson Bay, and secondly, when they asked for a license to go and trade with the Indians, as was necessary in the French régime, the governor informed them that they could have the license provided they paid him half the profits and took along two of his men to keep an eye on the trading.

That was in 1661. Radisson and Groseillers did as must any man who had the courage and desire to discover a great continent. They expressed their opinion of the governor by departing on their second journey without his license.

They did not return until 1664, and again brought in a huge fortune in fur. Far more important was the land they had discovered, the very heart of America. And how were they received? Louis' governor threw Groseillers into prison and, by "fines," robbed the explorers of nearly all the proceeds of the expedition.

Groseillers went to France and could accomplish nothing in an appeal to Louis' court. He returned with a scheme to sail to Hudson Bay in a French ship, but it never came. He and Radisson went to Nova Scotia, where they started north in a ship owned and commanded by Zechariah Gillam of Boston. But it was too late in the season. They arranged for two ships for the next year, and were sued in Boston because one was lost on a fishing voyage.

It was now 1665. Their money was gone. In two journeys to the northwest they had discovered a vast territory and had brought back fortunes in fur. They had been robbed by their king's governor and laughed at in their king's court in Paris. They had offered their monarch an empire in which today stand

Chicago, Detroit, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Milwaukee, Duluth, Winnipeg and the vast farming areas of the United States and Canada, and they had been kicked out.

They were now in Boston. Representatives of Charles II were there, and heard the explorers' story. Radisson and Groseillers were penniless. Why should they not accept an invitation to go to England and lay their plan before the English monarch?

Still drama dogs them. Captured by the Dutch on their way over, reaching England just after the great plague, being received by Charles, offered bribes by the Dutch to desert to Holland, accused by a Dutch spy of counterfeiting in an effort to discredit them, supported by an allowance from the king, balked temporarily by the war with Holland, questioned by Prince Rupert, busy with naval officers and merchants in outfitting for the first voyage—that was the life of the explorers until they finally set sail in 1668. And one of the ships was commanded by that same Captain Gillam with whom they had once started for Hudson Bay from Nova Scotia.

Radisson sailed on the *Eaglet*, a vessel of the royal navy. Groseillers went with Gillam. The *Nonsuch* weathered a gale in mid-Atlantic. The *Eaglet* was dismasted and, with Radisson aboard, got back to England. Groseillers and Gillam went on, to erect Fort Charles, the first English trading post in the north, "upon the ruins of a House which had been built there above sixty Years before by the English."

Groseillers spent the winter visiting Indians, who brought their furs in the spring, and in the summer the *Nonsuch* returned to England.

Radisson had fitted out another naval vessel to follow Groseillers in 1669 but it proved unseaworthy and put back. The *Nonsuch* was in the Thames when it returned.

We have now reached the early fall of 1669, five years after the return of the explorers from that first overland journey to Hudson Bay. At last reward is in sight. King and nobles are backing them. Wealthy men are investing in their enterprise. That great land they discovered is to be opened. The Hudson's Bay Company is about to be formed.

If anything detailed were written about the Company at the

time of its organization, it has not survived, or has not yet come to light. The story has been gathered from various sources, references in letters and diaries, minute and stock books of the Company, and state papers. The exact truth may never be known, and to understand the situation a knowledge of England in the time of the Restoration is necessary.

First, there is Charles II, on the throne since 1660 and firmly convinced, or at least giving an impression of a sincere conviction, that England was created for the sole purpose of affording pleasure for the Stuarts. Even nineteenth century historians were hard pressed to find virtue in the English court during Charles' time.

Surrounding Charles were the Cavaliers, the men who had helped place him on the throne, and a leader among them was Prince Rupert, a cousin. Rupert was given credit for first taking an interest in Radisson and Groseillers, but this is doubtful. Charles himself supported the explorers after their arrival in England.

It was this group of intimates of the King that participated in the first venture of 1668, before the Company was chartered. The Duke of York, Charles' brother and afterward James II, headed the list of shareholders as given in the stock book of 1667. Charles' minister, the Earl of Shaftsbury, was down for the largest amount, £700.

Some money was actually put up, of course. The ships had to be provisioned, trade goods purchased and crews paid. But the Duke of York received his share, £300, as a gift. Prince Rupert took a like amount but two years later had paid only £200. Most of the cash was probably furnished by those merchants permitted to share in the enterprise.

Charles' name does not appear in the 1667 stock book but when the Company was chartered three years later he was credited with £300 and was paid the annual dividends. This seems to have been the policy of the early Company. In the reign of William III, the king, according to the Company's own memorial to him, was presented with a "dividend of Two Hundred and twenty-five guineas upon three hundred pounds of stock in

the Hudson's Bay Company, now rightfully delivered to your Majesty."

The profits of that first voyage of the *Nonsuch* are not known but Groseillers was an excellent trader, the trade goods were cheap and, even if the gains were not large, the future wealth of the traffic in pelts had been demonstrated.

The picture now seems quite clear. A new source of revenue had been made available to the cronies of Charles II. They did not have to lift a hand. Some of them did not need to advance a penny. All of them had helped Charles to the throne. Precedent and the spirit of the times permitted the sovereign to grant exclusive privileges to the favored few. The theory of divine right prevailed. Here was a golden opportunity, not equal perhaps to that of the East India Company, but sufficient for a little extra spending money.



## CHAPTER V

We have now reached that point in the story of the Hudson's Bay Company concerning which there has never been any misrepresentation, its amazing charter. Always that document has stood on its own two feet. Its ornate language has shamed any attempt at description, and its completeness has left nothing to be added. For two centuries it remained as a monument to autocracy on a continent where democracy gained its first strength.

Application for the charter was made soon after the return of the *Nonsuch* in the fall of 1669. This is said to have been done secretly, and for some reason there was a delay. It was not until May 2, 1670, that Charles II affixed his signature and the Hudson's Bay Company came into being.

The famous document is still preserved in Hudson's Bay House in London. It was written on five sheets of parchment, each approximately thirty-one and a half by twenty-five inches. The first sheet bears an excellently done portrait of Charles II and sides and top are elaborately decorated. Even physically, it is a striking affair.

Its provisions have been published quite extensively. It is the only issue of the divine right of kings that survived on the North American continent and there is something of a shock in the thought that it was in force until sixty years ago, rubbed shoulders, so to speak, with the Declaration of Independence for nearly a century.

Briefly we will sketch some of the astounding features of the charter. To Prince Rupert and seventeen others, Charles gave all the land drained by waters that flow into Hudson Bay and Hudson Strait. He undoubtedly would have given more had he or any other European known it existed.

In area, the charter embraced between a fourth and a third of the entire continent. Within that area is practically the entire wheat belt of western Canada. It extends from close to the At-

lantic, in Labrador, a point lying six hundred miles east of New York City, to the Rocky Mountains almost in the longitude of San Francisco.

It did not extend so far to the north, for a few hundred miles to the west of Hudson Bay the rivers begin to flow to the Arctic Ocean. And farther west, in the center of the great western plains, other streams start northward and, through the Mackenzie, drain also into the northern sea.

But on the southern side we find streams rising not far from Quebec and Montreal that ultimately reach James Bay. This is more true of the Great Lakes region, and north-flowing streams start within a few miles of Lake Superior. Westward, the charter begins to touch the United States. It includes a strip straight across the northern end of Minnesota, reaches farther south at the North Dakota boundary, bites a chunk out of western North Dakota, but from there on keeps north of the international boundary.

A century and a half later, by royal license, the Hudson's Bay Company was to have exclusive trade in practically all of Canada, except in the settled portions of Ontario and Quebec.

All rights covering ownership of the land embraced by the charter were specified, and included an exclusive right to trade and to retain all minerals and precious stones and the fisheries within Hudson Straits. As if that were not enough, the Company was given the right to administer justice, both civil and criminal, "and to execute justice accordingly."

The unprecedented power was given the Company to have its own army and navy, build forts, issue commissions and even to declare war on any prince or people not Christians, and all officers of the English navy, army and civil government were commanded to give the Company aid.

The charter embraced everything known, and Charles most evidently signed it without any qualms. He was perfectly willing to see a few of his close friends add a bit to their incomes. Money wasn't always plentiful in his court. One cannot help but smile at the thought of what a shock it would have been to His Majesty could he have learned how he presented to a choice few a land destined to be far richer than all of Europe in his time.

Charles did not ask much in return. The charter provided only that whenever a member of the English royal family entered the territory he was to be given "two elks and two black beavers." More than two and a half centuries passed, and the Company never fulfilled this obligation. Members of the royal family entered the territory. King George V, long before he ascended the throne, was one, but he was not paid.

A few years ago, on one of the visits of the present Prince of Wales to his Alberta ranch, George W. Allen of Winnipeg, member of the governing committee of the Company and head of the Canadian committee, decided that it was time the Hudson's Bay Company paid its rent. He obtained two live elk and two live beavers and planned to lead them to the Canadian Pacific Railway station in Winnipeg and present them to the Prince upon his arrival. But representatives of His Highness suggested that mounted heads and tanned skins would be more acceptable, and even then the Prince seemed most embarrassed by the payment. So the Company shipped the heads to his ranch and the skins to his residence in London.

Quite naturally, the names of Groseillers and Radisson did not appear in the charter. Most of those that did were of men who had backed the first expedition in 1668. Prince Rupert headed the list, which progressed down through a duke and an earl to men who could boast only "Sir" before their names, and ended with "John Portman, Citizen and Goldsmith, of London."

That plain and unadorned tradesman at the end tells a great deal, and it can be taken for granted that John Portman was a busy person. His name appears on action committees and an imagination does not have to be stretched to perceive Portman doing the work while the titled members played, for there was a lot of playing in Charles' court. Further, Mr. Portman was quite wealthy, which explains still more.

Sir John Kirke and one or two others showed some energy, however, and it was Sir John's daughter Mary whom Radisson married on his return from a voyage to Hudson Bay. One bit of gossip, reaching us from that time in a letter, credits them with an elopement, which may or may not be true. Later on, Louis

XIV was to attempt to use that marriage in an effort to annul a claim which Sir John Kirke's family had against the French.

The total capital of the Hudson's Bay Company upon receipt of the charter was £10,500, and considering the cost of the trading expeditions, it can be assumed that all the capital was not paid in. It was not needed. Radisson's two unsuccessful attempts to reach Hudson Bay had been made in vessels provided by the navy, and when the first fleet set forth in June, 1670, the month following the granting of the charter, all three vessels were loaned by the Admiralty.

If Admiral Byrd had discovered a fabulous gold mine near the south pole, had returned and organized a company, with the help of Secretary of State Stimson, a few Senators and a dash of New Yorkers, and perhaps Henry Ford, and if a block of stock were presented to President Hoover, and if Secretary of the Navy Adams had turned over a few fast cruisers to transport men and machinery to the mine and bring back the gold, perhaps we could get a better idea of just how the Hudson's Bay Company got its start.

It is only just to add that, aside from the modern attitude toward such things as charters and the bald use of government to foster private gain, there is a further striking and revealing similarity between the beginnings of the Hudson's Bay Company and the formation of the imaginary enterprise just outlined. We think of the south polar region as the most desolate and forbidding on earth. We cannot conceive of it ever becoming of any value to mankind, and should gold be discovered there, the common run of us would say, "If anyone has the nerve to go down and get it, let him have it. He'll earn all he gets."

Our own attitude toward the region around the south pole is hardly different than that of Englishmen in Charles' time to the land about Hudson Bay. Men from the British Isles had settled New England and Virginia. New England winters provided plenty of hardships for people from the more temperate home country. What were they to think, then, of the infinitely more rigorous climate and the desolate land of the north?

Captain Gillam, commander of the *Nonsuch* in that first voyage in 1668, himself a New Englander, was greatly impressed by the

severity of the winter, as his journal shows. The voyages of Hudson and Fox and Button revealed nothing to attract a European. The only other white men who had been in that land were Radisson and Groseillers and the story of their hardships was well known in London.

There was a wealth of furs in this desolate country, of course, and London undoubtedly said, as we would today in regard to the south pole, "If anyone has the nerve to go and get it, let him have it. He'll earn all he gets." Forty years later John Oldmixon, in his "British Empire in America," refers to the Hudson's Bay Company posts as "so wretched a Colony," and adds, "For as rich as the trade to those parts has been or may be, the way of living is such that we cannot reckon any man happy whose lot is cast upon this Bay."

One provision of the charter that was to cause more immediate trouble for the Company than any other was cited in Chapter II, the search for the Northwest Passage. The document begins with the presumption that the voyage of 1668 had been undertaken with this object in view, and continues, "And Whereas the said Undertakers, for their further Encouragement in the said Design, have humbly besought Us to incorporate them," etc.

Since the time of Queen Elizabeth, maritime England had sought a shorter and easier way to the Orient. On that quest Frobisher, Davis, Hudson, Fox and Button had sailed in vain. It was a subject which carried a popular appeal in much of Europe, this finding of an easier way to the fabulous wealth of the Indies and Cathay. It started Columbus on his way, and the Spaniards proved early, as witness Balboa, that the route was barred in the south.

Hudson found Hudson River in searching for a way through the continent. The French, in pressing up the St. Lawrence to the great lakes, were only continuing the effort of Cartier. Bays and indentations and rivers the length of the Atlantic seaboard were eagerly investigated, and men cursed this unknown continent which barred their way. Later, Cook and Vancouver and the Spaniards were to meet countless disappointments in the long inlets of British Columbia and Alaska as they sought the western

end of the passage. They succeeded only in establishing the extent of the continent.

But that idea of a Northwest Passage has clung even to our own day. For a time it eclipsed the north pole as a lodestone for adventure, and it was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that Amundsen proved its existence, and utter uselessness as a means of water communication. Now, in plans for airplanes between Europe and Canada by way of Iceland and Greenland, and in Wilkins' proposed submarine voyage beneath the polar ice, we have what is really a modern development of a project that stirred the adventurous for centuries.

At the time of the organization of the Hudson's Bay Company the search for a passage had been given fresh impetus by the reports Radisson and Groseillers brought from western tribes of a salt sea only a few days beyond the limits of their explorations, which may account for the inclusion of the Northwest Passage clause in the Company's charter.

But for half a century the Hudson's Bay Company did not lift a hand to explore the bay beyond the fur belt, all of which was known before its arrival. In the middle of the eighteenth century this negligence was used in the first furious attacks upon the "Gentlemen Adventurers," and it was not until one hundred years after the granting of the charter that an employee of the Company traveled across the barren grounds from the mouth of the Churchill River and found the Coppermine River flowing into the Arctic Ocean, thereby proving there was no waterway through the continent below the frozen sea.

As the Prince of Wales was paid two elk and two black beavers more than two and a half centuries after Charles II signed the charter, the same interval elapsed before the Hudson's Bay Company completed the Northwest Passage. Amundsen, of course, had already sailed through it in the *Gjoa*. The *Baychimo*, a Company steamship, from Vancouver on her annual arctic voyage, reached Cambridge Bay, in Victoria Land. The same year the *Fort James*, another Company vessel, sailed from Nova Scotia and reached Cape Gjoahaven, in King William's Island. The two ships wintered about 250 miles apart and a Company motor

schooner, the *Fort McPherson*, sailed from one to the other, completing the passage.

But even then, less than half a dozen years ago, the object of those voyages was fur, the extension of the fur trade, and that attitude was the Company's in the beginning.

## CHAPTER VI

If ever a commercial enterprise were blessed with advisers and potential leaders of proven ability, it was the Hudson's Bay Company in the first years of its life. Of all men then living, Radisson and Groseillers had the most intimate knowledge of the interior of North America and of its many savage tribes. They had discovered that vast wilderness, they had learned of more rich territory beyond, they had developed a marvelous proficiency in dealing single-handed with bands of Indians numbering thousands that had never seen white men, and they alone had brought fortunes in fur from the middle of the continent.

No Englishman knew anything of the interior of North America except what the two Frenchmen had told. No Englishman connected with the Company understood the Indian character or the fundamentals of dealing with those who harvested the fur. No Englishman in those early days, once he saw the low, desolate shores of Hudson Bay, had any desire to go farther into the forest than was necessary to cut timber for a fort. Rather, from the very beginning, he had only a dread of the wilderness.

Radisson and Groseillers were at home there. For many years they had been accustomed to the severe northern winters, to an exclusive diet of meat and fish, to traveling by canoe and snowshoe. They found nothing in that somber land that was forbidding, but everything that was enticing. There was fur to glut the desire to trade which was Groseillers', and there were great rivers to stir Radisson's passion for finding new people and new lands. And that desire of Groseillers' and that passion of Radisson's were at the command of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Stock in the infant concern was set aside for Charles. Stock was presented to the Duke of York. Prince Rupert never paid for all his. It is doubtful if several others did. The dividends in the first eleven years were two hundred per cent of the original capital. Radisson and Groseillers were never given a share of stock,



never were permitted to participate in ownership or returns. Much later, for a time, Radisson received the dividends on £200 worth of stock.

When the Company's first expedition sailed in June, 1670, the month following the signing of the charter, the command was divided between the captains of the three vessels loaned by the navy and Charles Bayly, the Company's first governor in America. Radisson and Groseillers were advisers, and because they alone could speak Indian languages, they undoubtedly were to do the actual trading with the Indians. But they had little or no power.

The sea captains performed feats of navigation that would terrify most present-day masters. From that day to this, the achievements of the Company's ship commanders have been truly remarkable, and have remained unsung. Hudson Strait and Hudson Bay are filled with dangers, and then were uncharted. One of those first captains, and several of their successors, met death in the long centuries the Company has dared the tides and ice and storms of strait and bay.

But they were mariners and, aside from Captain Gillam of Boston, who commanded the *Nonsuch* and, with Groseillers, established Fort Charles in 1668, knew nothing whatever of the fur trade or of the territory about the Bay.

Nor had Bayly, in charge of the trade itself, ever had experience in savage lands or in dealing with savage people. He was a tradesman, selected perhaps by John Portman, goldsmith, or possibly was a retainer of one of Charles' friends. His was the bigotry of the period, and that seagirt contempt for, and suspicion of, anything not English. Like others of his time and class, he had an ample hatred of Frenchmen and Catholics, and he possessed that empty pomposity of the mediocre person who suddenly finds himself in a position of power.

That first expedition, in 1670, reached Fort Charles, at the mouth of Rupert River. Groseillers immediately began trading with the Indians he had brought to the Bay two years before, while Radisson, in the *Wavero*, smallest vessel of the fleet, followed the shore to the west and north.

He had little time for exploration, but he found the Moose

and Albany Rivers and even reached the mouth of the Nelson, which later was to become the center of the Company's trade for nearly two hundred years, and he satisfied himself that posts should be established at all three places. Each of those streams drained immense territories of the richest fur land in America and offered comparatively easy access to the interior. The subsequent history of the fur trade completely justifies Radisson's foresight and enterprise. The sites he selected became focal points of the Company's operations for two centuries, losing importance only with the railroad extension of modern times.

The expedition sailed back to England that fall and returned in 1671. Radisson again went west and north, carrying trade goods, meeting the Indians from the south and southwest. He and Groseillers remained through the winter and the next summer, and that second season, 1672, only two years after the signing of the charter, they learned that by no means did the Hudson's Bay Company enjoy the monopoly granted to it.

The French were working into that vast territory to the south and the southwest of the Bay and getting the fur that would otherwise have gone down the rivers to the English traders.

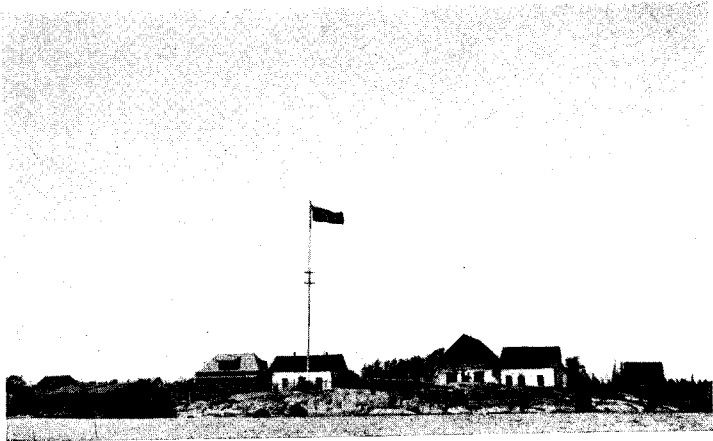
Thus began the first of many raids upon the sacred territory given by King Charles to Prince Rupert and his friends, and such raids were to continue without interruption for a century and a half, until the Company was at last brought to its knees and faced complete disaster.

To Radisson and Groseillers, there was only one answer to such a situation. The French were compelled to go up the St. Lawrence, up the Ottawa, across the Great Lakes and on through a maze of waterways to reach the western fur country. The two Frenchmen had traveled that route, carrying a meager supply of trade goods in birch bark canoes, and knew its dangers and hardships. It was impossible to go out and back in one season. The English, from the bottom of James Bay to the Nelson River, could ascend several rivers and reach the heart of fur land with comparative ease and speed.

Groseillers wanted to depart at once and build a fort up one of the streams flowing into James Bay and counteract the French influence. Radisson wanted to go on to the Moose and Albany



Fort Good Hope, N.W.T.



A typical trading post of the wood country.



and Nelson, establish posts there and precede the French into the southwest.

There must have been many torrid arguments among the leaders of those first expeditions. One can easily conceive of Radisson's fervent pleas, and the maddeningly apathetic and suspicious retorts of the others. It is all right to have your mariner bluff and hardy, when he is at sea, and there is an advantage in the slowness and caution of the English shopkeeper, when he is in England. The qualities of neither fitted him for opening a new country and carrying on commerce with a strange people.

Those men knew nothing of the wilderness, and they were afraid of it. They knew the French were hurting the trade, but in Groseillers' counter thrust they saw only an effort to help his countrymen defeat the Company, and openly said so. Racial and religious bigotry and bitterness governed the Englishmen.

Radisson would not submit to it. He had made two journeys to the northwest and, though the ships' captains opposed any extension of the trade in that direction, he finally won Bayly over to making an exploratory voyage, and the entire party set sail from Fort Charles.

Just there, as so many times in the history of the Company, its progress hung by a hair. Radisson might have proved his point, might have flung out a barrier of posts that would have halted the French, but—

The courtiers of Louis XIV who were interested in the fur trade of New France had never forgotten the two rich stores of pelts that Radisson and Groseillers had brought out in 1660 and 1664. In 1661 an attempt had been made to forestall the two explorers in their effort to reach Hudson Bay, and other expeditions followed, especially when the activities of the English in the Bay became known.

Now one of the French efforts was to prove successful. During the absence of the Hudson's Bay Company fleet, on that cruise to the northwest, Father Albanel, a Jesuit in Canada, though born in England of English parents, reached Fort Charles by way of the Saguenay and Rupert Rivers. The post was deserted, so he raised the French flag and took possession of the land in the name of France.

Then the English returned!

With all the feeling engendered by Radisson's restless energy and the inactive nature and suspicions of the English, the result can be understood. Governor Bayly flew into a passion of denunciation and accusation. He saw in the priest's presence an attempt by Radisson and Groseillers to undermine the Hudson's Bay Company. He would have arrested Father Albanel had the Jesuit not carried passports. He was further enraged upon learning that the priest had brought letters to Radisson and Groseillers.

From that period several accounts have come. They credit knockdown fights between the two Frenchmen and Bayly, spying upon each other in the woods about the fort, and the final desertion, overland to the St. Lawrence, of Radisson and Groseillers after Bayly had threatened them with death. Some of this was true, perhaps, but the Frenchmen did not desert to Canada.

They did return to press their plan of extending the trade by appealing to the Governor and Committee in London. But the captains and Bayly talked, too. It was the English against French, apathy and inertia against fire and vision. Racial and religious feeling overruled reason. The mere fact that Radisson was asked to take an oath of fidelity to the Company shows what little chance he had.

The Hudson's Bay Company never would have come into being without Radisson. He was not given a share in the enterprise. Now he was to be denied weight in shaping its policies when he, of all men, was best fitted for such a task.

Opposed to the suspicion and neglect of the English, was a tempting offer from France, debts paid, a commission in the navy and a gratuity of £400. There was no future in England for Radisson, except work at £100 a year in the service of men who would not make use of his ability or believe in his integrity.

When we reflect that the Company was organized by a close cabal about the throne of Charles II, when we recognize that its sole purpose was big gains on a small investment and for slight effort, when we consider the racial and religious feelings and suspicions of the period, we can more readily understand why Radisson was shoved aside and why, in disgust, he returned with Groseillers to France.

For a time Radisson was well treated in the land of his birth. The promises were kept. When the French fleet to which he was assigned was lost in the West Indies, the king himself advanced money for his needs and he was offered the command of a war vessel. But he declined this and asked for a commission in New France.

We now begin to see the cunning hand of Louis XIV. The family of Radisson's wife held claims against the French government dating from the capture of Quebec, and those claims had not been paid after fifty years. Radisson suddenly discovered that he was unable to accomplish anything in Paris, and ultimately he learned why. Colbert, Louis' minister said, that as proof of his loyalty, he should bring his wife to France.

Radisson went to England for this purpose but his father-in-law, Sir John Kirke, a leading figure in the Hudson's Bay Company, would not permit his daughter to leave. Sir John understood what lay back of this. It is doubtful if Radisson ever suspected it. Sir John was his firm friend long afterward.

But Colbert was furious. Louis might have had a fine weapon for his tricky diplomacy with England if Mary Kirke had been resident in France.

The years slipped by and Radisson remained in Paris, longing to return to the new world wilderness and balked in every effort. Courtiers still held a monopoly of the fur trade in Canada. To them it was a means only to wealth, no matter how gained, and they refused to share it in any way with the man who had pressed that trade farther than any other.

There is insufficient data to gain a definite understanding of what finally transpired. Colbert was in it, and La Chesnaye, a fur trader in Canada. Also Frontenac, governor of New France, who had already granted a monopoly to others. Frontenac now issued passports to Radisson and Groseillers for a voyage into Hudson Bay. What bit of trickery was afoot is not clear, but those Frenchmen had some scheme in mind to profit by an unlicensed voyage, and the two explorers, absent from their beloved wilderness for so long, jumped at the chance to get back into the fur trade.

But they were to be duped once more. La Chesnaye was to furnish two ships for the expedition, but when they appeared at Isle

Percée, at the mouth of the St. Lawrence, a secret rendezvous where Radisson, Groseillers and Jean Baptiste, a son of Groseillers, were awaiting them in the spring of 1682, they proved to be wholly unfit. One is said to have been fifteen tons and in wretched condition. The other was larger and stronger. Both were poorly equipped, scantily provisioned and manned by twenty-seven men who were already on the verge of mutiny.

But fur land was Radisson's lodestone. The years were slipping past. There was land to explore and wealth to be had, and none deserved more than he. He himself took the smaller and weaker ship and the perilous voyage into the north was begun.

That voyage in itself is an epic. Only a man with Radisson's courage and determination could have forced it to a conclusion. They escaped pirates, escaped huge icebergs, escaped the terrific storms of the northern seas. Mutiny threatened constantly, but Radisson was fighting to get back into the fur trade, back to the land he had discovered, and he would not quit. Up along the forbidding Labrador coast they went, through the appalling swirl of the ice in the swift currents of the Hudson Strait, across the Bay.

In the end both ships anchored in Hayes River, close to the mouth of the Nelson, where Radisson had urged the Hudson's Bay Company to build a post.

Port Nelson was the most strategic point on the Bay. It became in time the center of the fur trade in America. Radisson had recognized its value in his first exploratory voyage in the Company's service. Now, twelve years after the signing of the charter, the "Gentlemen Adventurers" had failed even to visit the place.



## CHAPTER VII

The day after Radisson's arrival in Hayes River in 1682 he went exploring. Groseillers remained to build a rude fort of logs while his son, Jean Baptiste, accompanied Radisson.

We have here a good example of the reasons why Radisson rises above his brother-in-law and almost constant companion, Groseillers, in the story of the Hudson's Bay Company. Throughout their association it was always thus. Groseillers was the trader, eager to reach far places but content to extract only the advantages in the fur trade which new lands gave him. Radisson, restless, dynamic, adventurous, risking his life countless times, aware always of that desire as a boy captive of the Iroquois that it would be his "destiny to discover many wild nations," is not only the colorful figure but the one who accomplishes the most.

Groseillers, too, was older. He was now on his last voyage to the Bay and soon was to return to Canada in disgust and with a deep sense of the injustice accorded him. He died, probably on the St. Lawrence, and, it is believed, before the end of the century.

In this, their last joint undertaking in twenty-five years of co-operation, the qualities of the two men are in vivid contrast. They were on the brink of an adventure as bizarre as the entire history of the fur trade affords, and in that adventure it was Groseillers who remained in the fort and conducted the trade while Radisson, reckless, daring, adroit, proved to the satisfaction of two kings and the Hudson's Bay Company itself that he was still a dominant figure in the fur traffic.

In that exploring expedition, begun almost as soon as his feet touched the bank, Radisson demonstrated his energy and ability to get things done. He was in command now, not subject to the fears and suspicions of English tradesmen and mariners. In a short time he penetrated to the vicinity of Lake Winnipeg, following a route which for generations was to be the main road of the fur trade. He met many Indians, perhaps some who had heard of

him on his previous journeys beyond the Great Lakes, and the savages promised to take their fur to his fort.

This was in 1682. He had wanted to do the same thing for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1674.

Immediately upon Radisson's return from the interior, he and his companions heard the booming of cannon at the mouth of the river. To them it meant only one thing, the arrival of a Hudson's Bay ship which would quickly discover their puny fort and its slim garrison.

In Radisson's mind at that moment the situation was one of pure tragedy. He was back in fur land, actively engaged in an enterprise which meant life itself to him, and now disaster threatened. Cannon of the English ship, or ships, could demolish Fort Bourbon, drive its people into the wilderness and sink the two miserable vessels in which the Frenchmen had come.

Yet Radisson, by courage and nimble wit, converted that situation into one that was little less than pure farce. If we are to follow the swift changes in plot, it is necessary first to set the stage.

The Nelson River, draining much of the interior of Canada, flows into the west side of Hudson Bay. It is a large river with a wide mouth, the latter filled with shoals and reefs. Immediately south of its mouth the Hayes River, a smaller stream, enters the Bay. The two rivers are parallel for many miles and a long tongue of low land lies between. This is crossed by a creek or canal navigable for canoes.

Fort Bourbon, little more than a collection of huts, stood on this peninsula, on the north bank of the Hayes River, and as soon as Radisson heard the cannon he took three men and paddled down the Hayes to spy on the ship. But though he went to the Bay, he did not find a vessel of any sort.

On his return to the fort he was told that the firing had been heard to the northwest, which meant in the Nelson River, so Radisson and his three men crossed the neck of low land by paddling in the small creek. On reaching the Nelson they saw a ship moored on the opposite side and a fort being erected on a small island near the north bank.

After spying that night in a vain effort to learn who the new-

comers might be, Radisson walked out into the open and called to them. To his astonishment, he discovered that it was not a Hudson's Bay Company vessel but one from New England, and in command of Ben Gillam, son of the first sea captain in the Company's service. Radisson knew young Gillam and was recognized at once.

The *Bachelor's Delight*, Gillam's vessel, was a pirate ship, of course, its crew poaching within the sacred precincts of the English Company, and Radisson immediately suspected that Ben Gillam's father, Captain Zechariah Gillam, was in league with his son in this illicit venture.

Radisson knew the older Gillam well. Together, they had attempted a voyage to Hudson Bay in 1664, when they were turned back by ice. Gillam and Groseillers established Fort Charles in 1668, and the New Englander was one of the leading opponents of Radisson's expansion schemes. Radisson refers to him as "having declared himself my Ennemy at London," which was in 1674, when Radisson quit the Hudson's Bay Company in disgust and returned to France.

Ben Gillam appeared to be friendly on recognizing Radisson, perhaps too friendly when he invited the Frenchmen aboard his ship. Radisson accepted the invitation, but after arranging that two New Englanders wait at the canoe with the three Frenchmen. The explorer was not going to be trapped.

Radisson explained at once that he had taken possession of all that district for France, that he had two large ships, a strong force of men and a substantial fort, and that he expected more French ships any day. He was very friendly and suggested that Gillam keep his men on the island lest they might be harmed by the Frenchmen scattered along the banks of the rivers.

Ben Gillam must have been impressed for he made the proposal that the two parties live in peace and divide the trade of the district. The Frenchman replied that he would discuss this with his companions and give his decision later.

Radisson departed, not by way of the creek across the peninsula, for that would indicate to the New Englanders in which direction the French fort lay, but down the Nelson toward the Bay. As he paddled he wondered if he could keep young Gillam

from learning how weak the French forces really were, and also if he could devise some method to capture the *Bachelor's Delight* and its crew. He had not found an answer to these problems when he saw a large ship coming up the river under full sail, and only nine miles from Gillam's island fort.

There could be no doubt but that this was a Hudson's Bay Company vessel, come at last to establish a post where Radisson had suggested operations eight years before. If it kept on it would discover the poachers and learn of the presence of the French fort. Inevitably there would be a combination against the French.

Few incidents in Radisson's life afford a better example of the man's resourcefulness, courage and daring than the subsequent events. Only the fact that the English and New Englanders were slow of wit, dolts and bunglers in contrast with the keen and suave Frenchman, robs his exploits that winter of glory. He was so immeasurably superior, the situation became farcial rather than dramatic.

When he saw the second ship approaching, Radisson could easily have fled, bundled his men aboard the two French vessels and escaped. Instead, he turned ashore and lighted a fire. The approaching ship believed it to be an Indian signal and anchored. A boat came off, bearing Captain Zechariah Gillam and John Bridgar, sent out from England as governor of a new fort to be erected on the Nelson, and six seamen. All were armed.

As soon as the boat grounded, Radisson ran out, covered the English with his musket and commanded them to halt. His three men stepped out of the brush at different places and gave the impression of commanding separate detachments. The English were warned that the French had already taken possession of that territory.

The astonished Bridgar could only protest friendliness and was permitted ashore. Radisson repeated his story of a strong French force and fort and his warning that the English would be wise not to let their men wander on land because of the many Frenchmen scattered through the forests. He seriously advised, too, that the *Prince Rupert*, the Company's ship, not be taken farther up the river.

Radisson was invited aboard the vessel for dinner, and accepted, first taking care that hostages were left ashore, and after a friendly visit he departed down river in his canoe. But he came back through the woods and satisfied himself that the Company men would go no farther upstream. Only then did he go to Fort Bourbon, where he told Groseillers of the situation.

There followed an astounding game of hide and seek. Radisson returned to the Nelson to find the *Prince Rupert* aground in the mud and the Company erecting a fort a mile away on shore. Radisson visited the two bases of the now divided Hudson's Bay Company force. He presented Captain Gillam with fresh meat, was most agreeable, and learned how careless the English were in protecting themselves from a possible attack.

Then he visited the younger Gillam, whose suspicions were already aroused and who was not so friendly. The New Englanders had a well-built fort, with cannon mounted, and they expressed doubts of that "strong French force."

Radisson saw that Gillam was not going to remain in his fort, and he would not have to go far to discover the Hudson's Bay people. That would be the end of French hopes. Something more than a dread of numerous Frenchmen scattered through the forest was necessary. Again Radisson fell back on his wits. He told Ben Gillam of the presence of the Hudson's Bay people only nine miles away and offered to disguise the son as a French woodsman and take him to see his father.

Ben was eager to go but Radisson first pointed out the dangers to the poachers in their present situation and outlined a course of action which would protect them. Or so it seemed. In reality, Radisson's suggestion would protect the French from discovery by the English.

Radisson's real motive was more subtle. If Captain Gillam learned that his son was so near, not only would the father's mouth be closed but he would do all in his power to prevent Bridgar from discovering the presence of the poachers.

All this was accomplished, Ben Gillam holding a long conference with his father on board the *Prince Rupert* and departing without detection. But a new danger developed for Radisson. Both Bridgar and Ben Gillam became suspicious of the claims of

French strength and, independently of course, sent out spies to find Radisson's fort.

Meanwhile, winter had set in. Already Radisson had warned Captain Gillam, as a result of reports he had from the Indians, that the Nelson anchorage of the *Prince Rupert* was not safe. "But hee was displeas'd at my Counsell, saying hee knew better what to doe than I could tell him." A second warning was of no avail, and the river froze over. Radisson knew the ship would be lost and detailed men to watch it.

The Frenchmen were at home in the northern winter wilderness, while the English and New Englanders were not. Radisson thus had little difficulty in capturing Bridgar's spies.

And then. "The 2 Englishmen which my people brought, told me the Company's shipp was stav'd to peeces, & the captain, Left, & 4 seamen drown'd."

The Hudson's Bay Company people were now ashore, confronted with starvation. Eventually four men did die. Radisson supplied them with food, kept spying on the two forts, and English spies whom he captured or kept as hostages preferred him to the Company's governor. Bridgar and his men were no longer a source of danger.

But Ben Gillam was. He seemed determined to find the French fort, so Radisson invited him to it. As a result of that visit, of a ruse, and of what was practically a bet between the two leaders, the Frenchmen captured the New Englanders' fort without a struggle.

But a New Englander escaped and ran down the river to report the French attack to Bridgar. The Hudson's Bay Company governor was perfectly willing to combine with the poachers, if thereby he might defeat the French, and in the night took his men to Ben Gillam's fort, unaware that Radisson had captured it. He knocked at the gate, was admitted, and immediately he and his band were made prisoner.

Radisson was now in command of the situation. With an inferior force, he had captured both opponents. When the Indians came down in the spring, the French got all the fur. Quick wit and energy had won out in a situation that seemed hopeless.

In the story of that winter Radisson's character is particularly

bright in contrast with those of his enemies. Bridgar so abused his own men they were glad of asylum in Fort Bourbon, and the Company's governor drowned his ultimate defeat in drink. Radisson gives Captain Zechariah Gillam's attitude. "Hee told me the ship belonged to the Company; that as to Trade, I had no cause to bee afraid on his account, & that though hee got not one skin, it would nothing trouble him; hee was assured of his wages."

If Captain Gillam had survived the winter he would have been tried in London on a charge of complicity with his son in piracy. Ben Gillam later was arrested and tried with Captain Kidd as a participant in the latter's marauding ventures.

Radisson dominated that situation, won against a greatly superior force not only without shedding blood but with an engaging gallantry. He supplied the Hudson's Bay Company people with food when they were starving. Even in the end, when Bridgar and Ben Gillam plotted to kill all the Frenchmen, he did not resort to drastic measures.

Radisson's ability to make friends with savage people and control them was unusual, and probably due, in part, to an understanding gained during his captivity and many journeys with Indian tribes. When the Indians came down the Hayes with their fur that spring and saw the prisoners, they offered 200 beaver skins for the privilege of butchering the English, Hudson's Bay Company men and poachers alike.

The prisoners greatly outnumbered the victors when spring came, and then a new disaster threatened. The two small ships of the French were caught by a terrific ice jam and demolished as they lay in a small creek. A small vessel was constructed of the wreckage and in this Bridgar and his people were sent to the Hudson's Bay Company posts in James Bay.

But Bridgar became frightened of the ice and asked to be taken out with Radisson on the *Bachelor's Delight*, Ben Gillam's vessel. He still plotted against Radisson, who was warned by an Englishman, and he was carefully watched until the New England vessel, with prisoners and fur aboard, arrived in Quebec. Jean Baptiste Groseillers and seven men were left to guard Fort Bourbon and carry on the trade. The Hudson's Bay Company and New England forts were burned.

Upon their arrival in Quebec, Radisson and Groseillers received the reward that was destined to be theirs for everything they accomplished in exploration and the fur trade. The Governor of New France released the prisoners, gave Ben Gillam his ship, and Governor Bridgar sailed with the poacher for New England. Radisson and Groseillers were instructed, by letters from Colbert himself, to proceed to Paris and report what they had done in Hudson Bay. This necessitated that they leave their business affairs to La Chesnaye, and it is needless to record that they never received any returns.

Colbert died before they reached France and the two exproers arrived in Paris to find the English Ambassador, Lord Preston, laying charges in Louis' court that Radisson had "cruelly abused the English, Robbed, stoln, and burnt their habitation; for all which my Lord Preston demanded satisfaction, and that exemplary punishment might be inflicted on the offenders, to content his Majesty."

But Radisson reported to De Signalay what had happened and his course was approved by the French court. Once more he saw a bright future. His losses on the last expedition were to be made good and ships for a return voyage to Hayes River were fitted out. Lord Preston also made advances, and Radisson was urged to return to England, where he was promised "all kinds of good treatment & an entire satisfaction" at the hands of the English court and the Hudson's Bay Company. Members of the Company wrote Radisson, urging that he return. He had proven his ability at last.

In Radisson's own story he says that he decided to accept and that, while preparing for the French expedition he gave his countrymen the slip and went to London. This has been called Radisson's "crowning treachery," this second desertion of France. His new friends of forty years ago could not explain it. The best they could do was to say that he was a reckless, hair-brained individual.

And then Agnes C. Laut cleared up the mystery by delving through state papers of England and France. Radisson did not go to London of his own free will but because he was commanded to do so by Louis XIV. Louis wanted that fur land in the north, but



he had a secret treaty with Charles and at that time he did not want a break with the English. So the French Department of Marine ordered Radisson to go to London and on to Nelson River, there to place in the hands of the English the establishment he had built. And the order concluded with the statement that the indemnity claimed by the Hudson's Bay Company could be accommodated by turning over to the Hudson's Bay Company all furs and goods in the French posts.

That was typical of Louis. He was perfectly willing to satisfy the Hudson's Bay Company with fur not his own but the property of his subjects.

Back in London again, in May, 1684, Radisson was warmly welcomed by the Hudson's Bay Company. He was presented to His Majesty, he told the Company he expected to find 15,000 to 20,000 beaver skins at Fort Bourbon and that he would take possession of them for the English. He asked only that he have a quarter share and that his nephew, Jean Baptiste Groseillers, have a share. This was assured him and he set sail at once.

Radisson did as he had promised, though he found only 12,000 skins at the French fort. He told his nephew what had happened, and how he would be taken care of by the English, and that fall all returned to England. There Radisson got a horse and rode to London, arriving at midnight, and the next morning he was taken before Charles to report. Charles ordered that the Company be told "to have care of my interests & to remember my services."

Here is the explorer's own account of how the Hudson's Bay Company kept its promises, and it is the final paragraph in the journal Radisson has left us:

"Some days after (his audience with Charles), I went before the Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, to render to it an account of my conduct, hoping to receive their approbation of my proceeding as the first fruits of the just satisfaction & recompence which was my due; but in place of that I found the members of the Committee for the most part offended because I had had the honour of making my reverence to the King and to his Royal Highness, & these same persons continued even their bad intention to injure me, and, under pretext of refusing me the justice which is due me, they oppose themselves also to the solid

and useful resolutions that are necessary for the glory of his Majesty and the advantage of the Nation and their own Interest."

Radisson sailed to the Bay the next year, but he was forced to sign a bond for £2,000 to keep faith with the Company. He was paid £100 a year and the dividends on £200 of stock. But when losses resulted from raids by the French, and dividends vanished, his pay was cut to £50.

Very little comes to us from that period. In a petition to the Company in 1692 by William Young, it is stated that Radisson was imprisoned in one of the posts on the Bay and beaten for refusing to help others cheat the Company. The Company's answer is typical of all its relations with Radisson. They were through with him, and he had no contract with them. Moreover, he could not return to France. He was their easy victim.

In 1694 Radisson sued the Company to have his salary restored to £100 and, despite the enormous influence of the "Gentlemen Adventurers," the court decided in his favor. Also, when William III came to the throne and the Company asked Parliament for confirmation of its charter, Radisson petitioned Parliament to incorporate his rights in such a document.

Later Radisson came into favor for a time. His testimony was necessary in arranging a peace treaty with France, in which the Company was vitally interested, and he received gratuities. He was paid regularly thenceforth, until he died in 1710. The courts had upheld his rights there.

It is easily understood why Radisson persisted through history as an ignominious figure. He was called Protestant by most writers though he is known to have confessed to a Catholic priest. He aided the Jesuits, and was aided by them, but he married an English woman, a Protestant.

Radisson, a Frenchman, was driven to England with a plan to tap the rich beaver country through Hudson Bay, with the result that the Hudson's Bay Company was organized and England obtained a foothold in the north.

Radisson, a foreigner, was suspected by bigoted Englishmen in the Bay and driven to France. He defeated the Company in the

Bay and then returned to England under circumstances that clouded his name for two centuries.

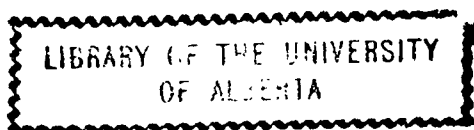
The French placed a price on Radisson's head after his return to England in 1684. Louis had placated the English. Radisson personally meant nothing to him. But Louis used those early discoveries of Radisson and Groseillers as a basis for French claims to the country around Hudson Bay. England, which profited by those discoveries, called Radisson a liar in its effort to prove that her own people, and not Radisson, had been first in the north.

And more than a century and a half later, in an effort to wrest Rupert's Land from the Hudson's Bay Company, the British in Canada employed those old French contentions and *claimed Radisson had discovered Hudson Bay*, and that Charles II, in the famous charter, had given away land that in reality belonged to France.

In Radisson's time and afterward, the English hated and distrusted all Frenchmen. Matters of religion were of extreme importance. England and France squabbled over a large part of America and drew up long claims in which nothing mattered except that each prove his point. The Jesuits were writing the history of New France. The Hudson's Bay Company had begun its policy of secrecy.

What chance had Radisson to escape misrepresentation and abuse? He was a firebrand then. His name was dynamite for two centuries after his death. Out of the religious feeling and racial bitterness of his time, out of the treachery of kings and corruption of governments, there emerged bias and bigotry that were to be broadcasted by later historians. Few figures in history were such wretched victims of fate and circumstances as Pierre Esprit Radisson.

It is interesting to imagine what might have happened had Radisson, with his energy and proven ability, been given a free rein by the Company in the first years of its life, easily accessible posts on the west side of the Bay his starting points. A man who could dash down close to Lake Winnipeg while his companions built a trading post would have thought little of crossing the plains to the Rockies. And one who had gone from Montreal to



the Missouri, or close to it, would soon have found his way from Hudson Bay to the Pacific.

The Hudson's Bay Company could easily have beaten Verendrye to the western prairies by more than half a century, might have completely forestalled the French traders in the interior. It could have strengthened its position there so thoroughly the disastrous conflict with the Nor' Westers might have been averted.

But Radisson, after discovering the Bay as a fur trading center, after instigating the formation of the Hudson's Bay Company, after showing the way to expansion, was never treated justly by the "Gentlemen Adventurers." They scorned his services, and the Company had to wait a century and a half for the monopoly Radisson might have given them in the beginning.

## CHAPTER VIII

For one who is enamored of the English court of the Restoration, who is fond of titles and derives a thrill from the mingling of commerce and royalty, which was the original Hudson's Bay Company, there is much of enthralling interest in those early years of the enterprise. It is the day of Samuel Pepys and his revealing notes, of plumed hats and royal favor.

Prince Rupert continued as Governor of the Company for twelve years. At his death the Duke of York, afterward James II, succeeded him. When James became King, the Duke of Marlborough, England's leading military figure and a power behind the throne, was elected to head the "Gentlemen Adventurers."

Stock of the Company went on the market. It was not only profitable but there was a distinction in sharing dividends with the monarch and his courtiers. Sir Christopher Wren, creator of St. Paul's, became a shareholder, as did Robert Boyle, one of the fathers of modern chemistry.

Meetings of the early Company were held in the quarters of Prince Rupert and in the Jerusalem and other coffee houses. Men wore gorgeous garments, wide hats with curling plumes, and swords. It was all very gay and very colorful perhaps, as we look back on it now, but it was also the London of special privilege for the few, of private gain in public office, as witness Lord Sandwich's advice to Pepys.

It was, too, an era characterized by wholesale suspicion and a lack of common honesty not found in the British commerce of modern times. Evidently no one was trusted. Even shareholders in the Hudson's Bay Company were required to take an oath to keep the secrets of the Company and not to trade, directly or indirectly, within the limits of the Company's charter. When ships departed, each vessel and each member of the crew was searched for articles that might be used in illicit trade, and when the ships

returned there was an even more rigorous examination to discover pelts brought in for private sale.

At the posts on Hudson Bay a severe discipline was enforced with this same object in view. Each man was required to swear secrecy and fidelity, and part of his wages was withheld to enforce honest conduct. Employees were not permitted to speak to Indians, or to leave the posts without special consent from the governor.

Despite the Company's precautions, trade goods slipped out and furs slipped back. Sailors and captains, traders in the wilderness, and even a shareholder, were caught in attempts to cheat the Company. In that period of special privilege, every man seemed to be out to help himself.

Yet the Company prospered amazingly. And why not? It was the day of the press gang, of astonishingly low wages. The second governor to go out to the Bay received one hundred pounds a year, servants twenty pounds, some as low as eight and twelve. Sailors were paid twenty to thirty. The first ships carried scarcely more than trinkets. On the fourth voyage, 1672, the trade articles taken were 200 fowling pieces, with powder and shot, 200 brass kettles, 12 gross of knives and 900 to 1,000 hatchets.

Never again was the Company to know such prosperity. In 1681, eleven years after the granting of the charter, dividends had totaled twice the original capital. In two succeeding years annual dividends of fifty per cent each were distributed. When we consider that all the capital was not paid in, we can understand how enormous were those first profits on a basis of actual investment.

In 1690 the capital was trebled, became £31,500, and this was strictly a "melon." No subscription was asked for. In 1720, when the Company was fifty years old, the capital was again trebled, bringing it to £94,500. Ten per cent additional stock was issued, bringing the total to £103,950, or half a million dollars, and at a time when the pound was worth about five times what it is today.

The beaver was the principal fur of the time. Charles I, long before, had proscribed any material except beaver fur in the manufacture of hats, an edict destined to be of great value to his son's friends. The style of the period demanded hats with wide

brims, a matter of further benefit to the "Gentlemen Adventurers." Beaver was the fur most sought in those first voyages, and while other and finer furs were taken, the beaver continued of chief importance until 1839, when the use of silk in hat manufacture began.

Other furs were ranked by their proportion of value to the beaver, while trade goods were priced, not in shillings, but in beaver skins. In time the "beaver," or "made beaver," became the standard of currency and continued so until comparatively recent times.

In those first days a beaver skin bought four pounds of shot, two skins a pound of powder and twelve good winter skins a gun. Five beavers bought a plain red coat and six a laced coat. Eight knives were given for a skin but two skins were required in the purchase of a looking glass and comb. Tobacco sold at a beaver a pound.

Total receipts of fur in London were around £20,000 annually and sometimes reached £30,000 or more. The last figure equals a quarter of a million dollars in modern money.

Backed by the charter and the court, the Company faced a dazzling future. It had scarcely touched the vast beaver empire. Yet the years passed and its operations were still confined to the shores of Hudson Bay. The original Fort Charles became Fort Rupert. Establishments were built at Moose, Albany, Severn and Nelson Rivers. Letters from the Governor and Committee in London to its governors in the Bay have been cited as evidence that efforts were made to extend the Company's activities, but there are also letters from the governors that fail to report anything accomplished.

Much later, charges of inertia were brought against the Company, and were denied, but the fact remains that the fur trade was not extended, except as more Indians came down to the Bay, and that no posts were built in the interior. In the Hudson's Bay Company's own book, published on the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the granting of the charter, occurs this statement: "On the other hand, the Company in its early years was not enterprising."

Even ardent adherents of the Company have admitted that

there was little to praise in that first half century or so. Enemies of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" have stressed that period and made it the subject of violent attacks. But these and many other criticisms of the Company are made without proper perspective. A better understanding may be obtained if a truer basis for criticism is sought.

The charter itself, autocratic and feudal though it may seem to us, was granted at a time when political conscience found nothing in it to condemn. To modern minds, that document is astounding, almost incomprehensible, but so are witchcraft and the Spanish Inquisition, and even slavery. Contrariwise, we still do a bit of lynching, and we have our Teapot Dome.

In like manner, the modern mind is only aroused to indignation by the slovenly operation of a commercial enterprise with such amazing prospects. We know we could have been so much more efficient and enterprising. We are sure we would never have permitted Radisson's genius to escape us.

But there were no modern minds in England two and a half centuries ago. Radisson's alone was far ahead of his period. There was no efficiency in the world at that time, even in armies and navies. Government was lax and corrupt. Law enforcement depended largely upon fear engendered by excessive punishment. Banking was a matter of metal-bound chests and the rules of finance and intricacies of international commerce were only vaguely sensed.

The industrial age and the age of the machine were still in the future. Large factories were unknown. Manufacture was a matter of small crude shops and work in homes. There was no business on a large scale, and no comprehension thereof.

Science had not been born. Illiteracy was common, superstition and bigotry were general. The spirit of feudal times survived. Men were still subservient to masters.

Surveyed from this light, the first days of the Hudson's Bay Company are better understood. The lack of initiative and the willingness to sit and wait were only in accord with the tempo of the times. The world did not know bustle and hurry, the drive for quick results.

The "Gentlemen Adventurers" saw no possible reason why they



should devote more money to the extension and perfection of a commerce which paid enormous returns on a small capital. Their employees in the Bay, insular-minded tradesmen set down in a strange and forbidding land, had no desire or incentive to get away from salt water or risk their lives among savages.

The early Hudson's Bay Company was a crude affair, but it was born in a crude world. The East India Company, which grew wealthy and sprouted a bright halo of glamorous adventure and romance, conducted its business to the same slow measure. Its famous ships, Cathay-bound, did not hurry. Each night the sails were furled, only enough being left to keep steerageway, and the entire crew went to bed, with the exception of lookouts and helmsman. Generations were to pass before American skippers began to drive ships and the world demanded speed.

We should remember, too, that the Hudson's Bay Company started life in a freebooting age. Any strange sail on any sea meant danger or booty. Governments signed peace treaties and winked at privateers, even at pirates. That same freebooting spirit animated trade. Europe had just discovered millions of savage people who could easily be despoiled or enslaved.

Of all the chartered companies of England, of all the enterprises conducted in a time when kings were accorded a divine right to rule, when governments were corrupt and ministers were tricksters, when personal integrity in business was largely a matter of coercion, the Hudson's Bay Company alone exists today. It boasts of its long life and early prestige. The wonder is that it survived such a heritage.

## CHAPTER IX

Several writers have extracted considerable romance and glory for the Hudson's Bay Company from the period following Radisson's return to the service in 1684. But the story furnishes a better theme for light opera, and at times farce comedy. Radisson himself set the tone for what was to follow when his wit and daring triumphed over Governor Bridgar and Captain Ben Gillam on Nelson River. For nearly thirty years the French continued that success, much in the Radisson manner, while the Hudson's Bay Company seldom offered better opposition than did the befuddled Bridgar.

As we see it now, we can understand that the poor old Hudson's Bay Company was caught between racial millstones. Two centuries after Columbus discovered America, it began to dawn upon Europe that this new land might be of value. It is true that the extent and possibilities of the continent were undreamed of, but French and English ships were bringing rich cargoes of fur from the west and men of both nations were beginning to suspect that here was something more than a wilderness.

These far-seeing minds were rare, however, and with little influence. Courtiers governed and courtiers always wanted money. In their greedy, heedless manner they reached out for the immediate spoils, in this case the fur trade of America. During the resultant struggle, the destiny of a vast land and of hundreds of millions of people was at stake, and the struggle took the form of piracy and petty warfare.

Louis XIV was responsible for much of the troubles of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" in their early days. Because of his secret treaty with England, he made a fine show of friendship by sending Radisson back to the Hudson's Bay Company with instructions to turn over to the English all furs and supplies held by the French on Hayes River. But at the same time his govern-

ment took steps to gain a further foothold in the Bay. Fur was too plentiful in the north for Louis' courtiers to overlook an opportunity to profit by the big returns.

The French struck quickly. Two vessels under La Martiniere appeared in the Straits. They bore a commission to capture Radisson and the intention was to get all the fur possible, by any means. The plans were quite elaborate. Jean Péré and two companions were sent overland and appeared at Fort Albany with the announcement that they were out on a pleasure trip. The intention was that they would coöperate with the French ships in capturing the fort.

La Martiniere waylaid the Hudson's Bay Company vessels at the west end of Hudson Strait, missed Radisson by minutes, and captured one ship. Fourteen of the crew were killed and ship and officers captured. The French did not follow this up but preceded at once to Quebec. Jean Péré was left stranded in the Bay.

The English placed him in irons and immediately gave an example of the sort of thinking that characterized their actions for many years. They marooned Péré's two companions on Charlton Island, down in James Bay, while they sent Péré to England, a prisoner. Their reasoning was good, from the English viewpoint. The island was twenty miles or so from the mainland, and that mainland an impenetrable wilderness. The men were as safely interned as if in a London jail.

But a French woods rover of that period was not afraid of wilderness or sea. The men escaped and made their way overland to Montreal, a distance of a thousand miles, and told how Péré was held prisoner in the Bay. All New France was aroused, and as a direct result of that escape from Charlton Island the Hudson's Bay Company lost several forts.

Meanwhile the English, too, became active. On the ship captured by La Martiniere was Mike Grimington, mate. Evidently the early Hudson's Bay Company had no prejudice against pirates or poachers, provided they were in the Company employ, for Grimington and Captain Outlaw, in command of another Company ship in the Bay that year, had been mates on that poaching vessel, the *Bachelor's Delight*, which wintered in the Nelson River in 1682 and was commanded by Ben Gillam. After being

captured by Radisson, they had sailed to England on a Hudson's Bay ship and there joined the Company's service.

But the Company chose well in this instance. Both became valuable mariners in the service of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" and continued in that service for many years. Grimmington, when captured by the French, was taken to Quebec and placed in jail. His captain was ransomed and another mate, Smithsend, was sold into slavery in Martinique. Grimmington got word to London of French plans and remained loyal. The Hudson's Bay Company stirred itself to resist further attacks on its forts and ships.

It must not be forgotten that during this raiding, destruction of property, imprisonment and murder of seamen, England and France were at peace. A state of war did not exist between the two countries, but kings did not necessarily declare war when they made war in those days. In that same period the English and French were capturing and losing half the islands in the West Indies. Whenever the mood struck a sea captain to take an island, he seems to have done so.

And just now the mood of New France, formed by the capture of Péré, was to wipe the English from the north. Louis could be more open in helping them now, for Charles II died in 1685 and the secret treaty with England no longer existed. And each year the value of American territory was increasing in European eyes.

Out of the demand for revenge that Péré's capture aroused in New France grew one of the most astounding military operations in the history of the continent. Under command of Chevalier de Troyes, thirty-three French Canadians and twice as many Indians marched overland from the St. Lawrence, starting on snowshoes, traveling from Montreal to Lake Abitibi before spring came and there building canoes and proceeding down a rapid-filled stream to salt water.

To take one hundred men through a thousand miles of practically unknown wilderness in winter and spring was in itself a stupendous achievement. No similar military expedition in North America can parallel it, and its success was probably due to the fact that it was not military. Both Indians and whites in that party were accustomed to self-sustenance in the forest. They could get their food as they traveled. They could laugh at hardships.

And among their leaders was Pierre Le Moyne d'Iberville, one of the most dashing and colorful figures in North American history, and his two brothers.

These Frenchmen, a thousand miles from their base, caught the Hudson's Bay Company napping. They captured Moose Factory with one slain on each side and then swept eastward across the lower end of James Bay and captured Fort Rupert, where Bridgar, whom Radisson had made prisoner at Nelson, was governor. They took also the Hudson's Bay ship anchored there and immediately started northeastward, by canoe and in the ship, to attack Fort Albany.

Indians warned Governor Sargeant and he met the raiders with a volley from his forty-three cannon. The French demanded surrender, and Sargeant refused. The governor had difficulty with his men. Employees of the Company demanded a raise in pay before they would fight, and they hid when they learned the French had brought cannon from Moose and Rupert. After two days of siege a subordinate waved a white tablecloth from a window and the French won.

Fort Albany was empty of food. The French left a garrison and dispersed overland for Montreal. More than thirty Englishmen, driven into the wilderness, perished of starvation in the following winter.

D'Iberville came back overland the next year. Louis XIV was up to his old tricks. He had a treaty with England which provided equal occupation of Hudson Bay by English and French, and secretly instructed New France to continue the attacks. The men of New France did so. They kept control of all the forts except Nelson and Severn. They captured ships by ruses in which the Company men present a sorry figure, and sailed away with booty past armed English vessels. For years they continued to outwit and outfight the Company.

And the Company? It brought suit against Governor Sargeant for £20,000 because he surrendered Fort Albany! All London laughed, and Sargeant emerged with an award of £350.

But the "Gentlemen Adventurers" kept at it. They recaptured Albany, yet when York Factory was attacked in 1691 the governor, on instructions from London, burned the fort rather than

have it fall into French hands. The French were not content with only Rupert and Moose, so in 1694 d'Iberville returned to the Bay with two frigates and laid siege to the rebuilt fort at York. At the end of three weeks of bombardment and attack, the Hudson's Bay tablecloth again appeared at a window. In the resulting parley, d'Iberville agreed to permit the English to remain in the fort with their provisions, under a French guard. The victor himself sailed with a rich store of loot.

But the Frenchman left in charge did not keep the terms of surrender and Company servants were driven into the forest, where many perished. Others were taken to France the following year and held for ransom.

We now have the astounding situation of the Hudson's Bay Company, granted so much of Canada by Charles II, possessing only one fort in that vast territory. The others were in the hands of aliens who had taken them by force in a time when there was no war.

But open war was declared soon afterwards between the two countries and the Hudson's Bay Company was more successful. Aided by the navy, the "Gentlemen Adventurers" recaptured York Factory and took a rich store of fur and supplies. At this time the Company was near bankruptcy. The large dividends of the first years were no longer paid and money had been borrowed. The fur from York Factory was sufficient to pay debts and provide money for a more ambitious program in the Bay.

Five ships, heavily manned and armed, sailed under the Hudson's Bay Company flag in 1697, but the terror of the "Adventurers," d'Iberville, also sailed with as many French men-of-war. In the *Pelican* he outdistanced his other ships and anchored off York Factory in Hayes River to await the fleet before laying siege. Sails showed on the horizon, but when they drew closer d'Iberville learned too late that it was the Hudson's Bay fleet. He did not flee. He could not. So he sailed out to attack.

Several stories of the resulting naval engagement have come down to us. One presents it as desperately fought as any sea battle in history. That is the French story. The English tempers it. Both agree on the results. D'Iberville's *Pelican* sank the *Hampshire*, a

fifty-two-gun man-of-war, and every soul aboard went down with her. She carried at least 150 men. Some say 250.

A second English vessel surrendered. The third fled. A gale blew up. The captured English ship was wrecked. The *Pelican* was driven ashore. D'Iberville was now in a desperate plight, stranded with all his men in the wilderness. But his other ships arrived, siege was laid, and in the end York Factory surrendered.

Meanwhile Louis XIV and England were signing a treaty at Ryswick. The Hudson's Bay Company afterward declared it was left the "only mourners by the peace," and well it might. The crafty Louis insured the rewards for his subjects' valor in Hudson Bay by arranging that each side should hold what it had.

This was a terrific blow not only to the pride but to the well being of the "Gentlemen Adventurers." Twenty-seven years after Charles II had given them all Rupert's Land, they found themselves awarded a tiny corner of it by international treaty. Old Louis was too wily an antagonist, the French Canadians were too clever and too aggressive for the slower-witted and wholly unadventurous English. The Hudson's Bay Company held Fort Albany and a post on Severn River built originally by refugees fleeing from other forts captured by the French. York Factory, by far the richest post on the bay, and Moose and Rupert were in the hands of France.

And thus the situation continued for sixteen years, not a glorious period for the Hudson's Bay Company. Both French and English ships entered the Straits each season, the French to get the rich harvest of fur that came down the Hayes from the interior, the English to carry home what could be gathered at Albany and in trading voyages along the east side of the Bay.

But even peace failed to bring security. When war did not exist between France and England, the French again made an overland raid on Albany. A Cree Indian saw them, warned the governor, and the attackers, believing they were sweeping down upon an unsuspecting garrison, received a volley that ended the fray before it had hardly begun. It was one of the few English victories in the piratical warfare of the period.

The Hudson's Bay Company was in a serious situation. It presented memorials to the government, in one of which it offered

to relinquish the south end of the Bay if it could retain the west side, which included rich York Factory. A little later it asked the government to send an expedition into the Bay and drive the French out entirely.

With big losses and dwindling profits, it seems strange that the Hudson's Bay Company held on through this period. Traditional English doggedness has been ascribed as the reason. Undoubtedly it was the hope for a big indemnity from France. Before Ryswick the Company had presented a bill to Louis claiming damages of £200,000. Later this bill was reduced to a little more than £100,000. As the capital stock was only £31,500, a monster melon was in sight, and the harried Company borrowed every cent it could to remain in business.

It also used its influence at court. The Stuarts were gone, and the Cavaliers had disappeared from among the "Gentlemen Adventurers." But William III was given stock in the Company, the all-powerful Marlborough was a past governor, the merchants of London were in the ascendent, and the Hudson's Bay Company had some influence.

It also rediscovered Radisson, hauled him out of his miserable quarters in a carriage, gave him some money and enlisted his aid in the claims against France.

But Louis was too cunning for them. He said he could be trusted to get out of the difficulty, and he did. Not one cent has France ever paid. The claim itself was padded, of course. One item for £25,000 was for the loss of Fort Nelson and the *Prince Rupert* in 1682, for which Radisson, then acting for the French, was blamed, although he tried to induce Captain Gillam to save his ship by shifting anchorage. "Fort Nelson" then consisted only of a few rude huts thrown up hurriedly, and it was without provision of any kind.

Nor did the Hudson's Bay Company have peace at home during this period. After the fall of the Stuarts it became fearful of the validity of the charter and petitioned Parliament to affirm the document. There was instant opposition on the part of the fur buyers and manufacturers of England, and even Radisson took advantage of the opportunity to ask Parliament to guarantee his own claims against the Company.



Parliament confirmed the charter, but for a period of only seven years. Its opponents were ignored. The Hudson's Bay Company was England's sole representative in the north, and in the struggle with France for the continent England could not give ground.

Meanwhile, French fur traders, who later were to be aggressive in the west, do not seem to have been more energetic on the Bay than the English had been. York Factory continued to be a profitable post, for many Indians came down from the Saskatchewan country. The French occupation did, however, produce the only description of the country and of the fur trade in that period from a man on the spot.

Nicolas Jeremie went out with the French in 1794 as an officer at the post. He was captured by the English when they retook the fort and returned with d'Iberville in 1797 to be in charge until Utrecht, in 1713. He wrote much on the older history of the country, but evidently based his statements on what he heard, with the consequence that he made some errors. What he wrote of his own time has never been questioned.

Even in Jeremie's early day, Indians had become so accustomed to firearms they forgot the use of the bow and arrow. War between France and England had broken out again, and as was generally the case, the Hudson's Bay Company received assistance. English privateers made it impossible for French supply ships to reach York and the other posts. As a result, Jeremie had nothing to offer the Indians for their fur, could not even supply them with gunpowder, and he records that many starved as a result.

He gave, too, an interesting sidelight on food supplies of the period. With the French as with the English, the only diversion of the long winter months was in shooting birds and snowshoe rabbits. Enormous quantities were consumed, and Jeremie relates that one winter, when a French naval party was staying at York Factory, it was decided that they keep count of the game killed. In the spring the figures disclosed that eighty men had eaten 90,000 partridges and 25,000 hares. Jeremie also tells of vast herds of caribou to be seen near the fort in his day.

The activity of the English privateers, and its consequent effect

on the French trade, proved doubly beneficial for the Hudson's Bay Company in the end. Not only was the enemy's ability to barter curtailed, but the Indians learned that the English were more powerful, for when the Hudson's Bay Company resumed control of York Factory by treaty in 1713, the fort was never again occupied by the French.

The years preceding were thin for the "Gentlemen Adventurers," however. Debts piled up and profits were slim, or entirely absent. Representatives could not collect a penny of the French claims. The outlook was black, and then came the final defeat of Louis XIV and Utrecht. By that treaty the Company received its Bay again, but no damages.

The English had little faith in French treaties, for at once the Company began to build defenses. A post was established at the mouth of the Churchill River and here was erected the second strongest stone fort on the continent. Many years were required in the building, and forty large cannons were mounted. The French did not return to the Bay, however, until 1782, when this fort, known as Prince of Wales, and pride of the Company for half a century, surrendered without firing a gun. The old Hudson's Bay tablecloth was still active.

The Company, with monopoly in the Bay after Utrecht, became prosperous once more, and that very prosperity and the spirit of the times came near bringing an end to its existence. The South Sea Company excitement was on. Stock companies were formed right and left. The public went mad over speculation in shares. The bubble swelled to astounding proportions, and no one considered that it might burst.

The "Gentlemen Adventurers" saw paper wealth mounting all about them and at last determined to share in a prosperity that every one considered real. Plans were made for a huge increase in capital stock, the shares to be placed on the market. "The Ancient and Honorable Company" was about to unload on a greedy public.

But procrastination was one of the chief characteristics of the Hudson's Bay, and now, for once, it proved an advantage. A week before the stock was to be placed on the market, the South Sea bubble burst. Many companies were wrecked, thousands of in-

vestors suffered financial ruin, while the "Gentlemen Adventurers," by the grace of their habitual tardiness, went on to success. They did treble their stock, and add a ten per cent subscription, bringing the total capital to £103,950, and in the next few years, even on this increase, paid dividends of five, eight and finally twelve per cent. Thenceforth, until 1737, the dividend never fell below ten per cent.

Meanwhile, other forms of ambition had seized the "Gentlemen Adventurers." Just before the South Sea excitement the Company began to take heed of Indian rumors of mines in the interior of America. These rumors had accumulated for years and at last a desire for quick wealth resulted in action. A Hudson's Bay expedition sailed from England in 1719 with iron-bound casks all ready to receive the precious metal, and disappeared into the Arctic. For half a century no one knew what became of it.

Later the Company was to claim this as an effort to discover the Northwest Passage, but, as when Frobisher sailed for Queen Elizabeth, gold was the object. If the passage were found, so much the better. Critics in England would be silenced. And there was also a profitable whaling industry to be opened up at the north end of the Bay.

The expedition was in command of Captain James Knight, more than seventy years old, who had been long in the Company's service, and who, unlike so many of the Company's officers in the Bay, had a record in the struggle with the French that was unmarred by use of that white tablecloth.

With two ships and fifty men, Captain Knight sailed north from Fort Churchill in the late summer of 1719. A year passed, and two and three, and no word came back. Company whaling ships kept a lookout for him. A ship was sent from England and searched two years without success. Fifty years later Samuel Hearne, in the Company's service, found an old Eskimo on Marble Island, three hundred miles north of Churchill, who explained the mystery.

The two ships were driven ashore in a "hole-in-the-wall" on the rocky coast of the island not long after leaving Churchill. The crews erected a shelter of the wreckage but many perished during the winter. Eskimos visited them the following summer,

gave them food, and a year later in 1721, the natives found five men alive. The wonder is that, with no chance for food, no fuel, no shelter from the Arctic blasts, they could have survived so long. The Eskimos saw them die that summer. The wonder is, too, that they made no effort to escape to the mainland. A half century later Hearne gathered what bones he could find and buried them.

The Hudson's Bay Company had enough of exploration after this disaster but it was not to be left in peace. There was no peace for the "Gentlemen Adventurers" in the first century and a half of their existence, and, as so often was the case, the attack came from within the kingdom. At the end of the seventeenth century the fur merchants had caused trouble. Now a brilliant Irishman of many attainments, Arthur Dobbs, appeared, and for years he harassed the Company so successfully any mention of his name must have caused a riot at meetings of the Governor and Committee.

In 1730, Dobbs was appointed engineer-in-chief and surveyor general of Ireland. He was a persistent, clever man and a born agitator. He must have been something of a demagogue. He had the passion of the reformer, but, as is so often the case, self-interest came to the top. He wound up by petitioning Parliament to cancel the Hudson's Bay charter and give him a new and exclusive right to trade in the Bay.

Dobb's fight against the Company was responsible for much of the adverse literature and for many of the charges against the "Gentlemen Adventurers." He began almost two centuries ago, and echoes of that contest are still heard and its false impress is still seen. So bitter was the fight, so sweeping were the charges, the books and pamphlets and government reports of the period offer little value in a search for the truth. It was a life or death struggle, and accusation and defense did not reject any combinations of words that served the purpose.

By this time the Hudson's Bay policy of secrecy had become traditional, and its jealousy of any one who stepped inside the chartered limits was easily aroused. But Dobbs kept after the Company so persistently, and so aroused public feeling, action became necessary. In 1736 two ships were sent out on a voyage

of exploration. No discoveries, but that only aroused Dobbs the more. In 1737 he organized an expedition under government direction and asked Captain Christopher Middleton, one of the best masters in the Hudson's Bay service, to take command.

Middleton refused, but in 1740 he consented and sailed in 1742. He carried directions as to what he must do upon reaching California. Of course, there was no passage, and immediately Dobbs accused Middleton of accepting a bribe from the Hudson's Bay Company not to discover the desired route. Dobbs and Middleton wrote books of charges and counter charges. The seaman was right, but Dobbs was too clever a man. He wrote many pamphlets, aroused public enthusiasm and finally induced Parliament to offer a prize of £20,000 for discovery of the passage. A company was organized by Dobbs and in 1746 two ships sailed, the *Dobbs* and *California*, names indicative of the spirit and the hope of the voyage.

Again no discovery, and again Dobbs would not cease his attacks. He had already written pamphlets and books and had been free with charges against the Company and against Captain Middleton. Now he petitioned Parliament for an investigation of the Hudson's Bay Company and also for a charter giving the exclusive right of trade to his own company.

His charges against the Company were that it had not discovered, or even made a real attempt to discover, the Northwest Passage, that it had not extended its establishments to the limits of the charter but intentionally had restrained trade to the shore of the Bay, that it had abused the Indians, ill-treated its own servants, and, finally, had encouraged the French.

The Company defended itself as best it could. Memorials were presented. Dobbs had touched the truth when he accused the Company of not extending trade. Disgruntled employees furnished most of the other accusations. And in asking for a charter for himself and associates, Dobbs made some attractive promises. The man really foresaw what was going to happen on the American continent later and he agreed to penetrate the interior and spread British trade.

In its defense, the Hudson's Bay Company placed special stress on the reputed journey of Henry Kelsey, a youthful employee, to

the Saskatchewan region in 1690. Until this time, the Company had never mentioned Kelsey, and his name does not appear in print until the Parliamentary investigation. Dobbs attacked the story, as did Joseph Robson, a Dobbs witness and ex-employee who later wrote a book in which he said the Kelsey journal, presented as evidence by the Company, "was no more Kelsey's than mine."

The Company also offered as evidence many orders to its governors in the Bay to press the trade inland, but, aside from the Kelsey journey, was unable to show that any such efforts had been made. And because of Dobbs' attacks, historians to this day have doubted the Kelsey story. It has been called the "Kelsey puzzle." His journal could not be made to fit any route, in view of modern geographical knowledge.

In 1926, nearly two centuries after the Parliamentary inquiry, Major A. F. Dobbs, of Ireland, presented to the Public Records Office of Northern Ireland an old manuscript copy of the Kelsey papers which had been found in the library of Arthur Dobbs. The papers were printed in 1929 by the Canadian Government. This journal, far more complete, has been checked geographically, and now, after nearly two and a half centuries, the Kelsey journey to the Saskatchewan is accepted as a fact.

The conclusions to be drawn at this time are interesting. First, Arthur Dobbs and Robson attacked the journal as presented to the Parliamentary Committee by the Hudson's Bay Company at a time when Dobbs must have had the truth in his own library. Secondly, the Hudson's Bay bungled when it submitted an incomplete record of Kelsey's journey. The last is a splendid example of the Company's policy throughout its career. Secrecy was a mania. Jealousy of intruders was a passion. The Company did itself much harm. It is guilty of suppressing the achievements of outstanding servants. Sheer chance vindicates Kelsey after nearly two and a half centuries. Any dispassionate review of the one hundred and fifty years following the granting of the charter arouses a question as to how many heroes died unsung because of a short-sighted, uninformed attitude on the part of "Gentlemen Adventurers" whose souls showed no trace of a spirit of adventure.

Driven from its hole by the Dobbs clamor, the Company made only a pitiful defense. No matter what the claims in behalf of the Hudson's Bay, the fact stands that it had accomplished little more than cling to its hold on the shore of the inland sea. Dobbs made one charge that was true. Trade had not been extended. By the time Parliament considered the matter, the French had pressed inland from the great lakes until they were almost at the Rockies. They had forts more than two thousand miles from their base of supplies. The Hudson's Bay Company could boast of one outpost one hundred and fifty miles from salt water.

Perhaps it was the very success of that French invasion that formed the decision on Dobbs' petition, and not Dobbs' charges or the Company's weak defense. England wanted the Bay and the continent beyond. The Hudson's Bay Company was established there. As at Ryswick and Utrecht, the Company emerged unshaken, not because of its accomplishments but because it afforded an English foothold in America. The Privy Council ruled that the case against the Company had not been made.

Mr. Dobbs went off to America as Governor of North Carolina, where he died eleven years later. The Hudson's Bay Company went back to sleep.

## CHAPTER X

We have now followed the Hudson's Bay Company for nearly a century and have yet to find what we have been looking for—an era of adventure, romance and restless energy, of devotion and loyalty, the conquest of a continent. We have not even found a powerful monopoly.

Thousands of men went out to the bay from England in that period. At sea there was courage and daring. Tides, icebergs and gales can never be tamed, and in northern waters only the strong survive. But the Englishman on land, in a strange and desolate environment, let the years slip past without accomplishment, without displaying initiative or daring, even without curiosity as to the vast continent from which savages came each year to trade.

So far as the record stands today, that century of sloth and inactivity and lack of courage was broken only three times. Individuals dared where the Company did not. They made journeys which were truly remarkable. They discovered new land, new Indian tribes, gained important knowledge of the interior of the continent. Of these three men, the first opened the way to a vast extension of trade, and the Hudson's Bay Company did nothing. The second extended that work, and was laughed out of the service and called a liar. The work of the third was used to silence talk of a Northwest Passage out of Hudson Bay, and for nothing else.

One hundred and two years after the granting of the charter, only three employees of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" had gone more than two hundred miles from salt water, so far as is known. In that first century we find three bits of outstanding achievement. We have only Henry Kelsey, gamin from London streets; Anthony Hendry, youthful smuggler from the Isle of Wight, and Samuel Hearne, young English seaman.

Henry Kelsey was born in the year that Charles II signed the



charter. He entered the services of the Hudson's Bay Company on April 14, 1684, at the age of fourteen. His first engagement was for four years, at the end of which time he was to receive eight pounds "and two shutes of apparell." The boy sailed from London for the Bay in 1684 on the same ship which carried Radisson to Churchill when the Frenchman returned to the Company's service.

As a part of the Kelsey legend, it has been said that this gamin from the London streets did not submit to the strict discipline of the early governors of Hudson's Bay forts, that he was whipped until at last he ran away and joined the Indians. After two years he is said to have returned with an Indian wife, and to have refused to accept the governor's pardon unless his wife were admitted to the fort with him. As a result of his experiences in this escapade, he was commissioned by the company to go inland on a voyage of discovery. This he did, finding new tribes of Indians whom he induced to come down to the salt water with their fur. He was rewarded and rose to the governorship of Fort Nelson. Many years later, when Dobbs attacked the Company, Kelsey's story was told for the first time and his journal was presented as proof of exploration.

This is a pretty story, but it does not agree with recently discovered facts. Robson, who was in the Bay much later, furnished most of the Kelsey color, and it may be that in the first year or two the boy did break rules, climb fort pickets and run away. But in the light of the new and more complete journal and of correspondence between London and the Bay he appears in a different rôle.

The year after Kelsey's arrival at Nelson, Governor Sargeant wrote to London that none of four men suggested by the Committee "nor any of your servants, will travel up country." That same year Robert Sanford reported that it was not practicable to try to reach the interior. Radisson, who was on the Bay at the time, had gone inland in 1682, probably as far as the vicinity of Lake Winnipeg, without any difficulty, but Englishmen in those days were possessed of a great fear of the wilderness.

An explanation that has never been suggested is that the Kelsey boy fell under the influence of Radisson. They made the

long voyage out together. They were in a fort together. One was a veteran, a man who had seen more Indians and more strange lands than any other white person. All the glamour and romance of an adventurous life were his, and who could be a greater hero to a boy bound for those same wild lands?

Just how much Kelsey was influenced by Radisson will never be known, but a striking similarity between the two can be found. Each possessed a reckless daring, a love for the wilderness. As did the Frenchman, the English boy seems to have felt that it was his "destiny to discover many wild nations." Though European-born, both leaped into the savage life as if reared to it. Privation, Indian manners and food, vast distances, isolation from their kind for long periods, these did not balk them.

Kelsey's achievement becomes doubly remarkable when considered in the light of his age and of the caliber of his associates in the Hudson's Bay Company service. Though only a boy, he dared where men cringed. Somehow, in those first years, he attracted attention. It may be that Radisson spoke of him to the London Committee, or that Governor Geyer wrote home in 1687, when Kelsey was only seventeen. Some one called him to the attention of the "Gentlemen Adventurers," safe in London, for when the ships went out in 1688 they carried a letter to Geyer which directed that he send "the Boy Henry Kelsey to Churchill River with Thomas Savage (a Cree youth) because we are informed he is a very active lad, delighting much in Indian Company, being never better pleased than when he is traveling amongst them."

"Because we are informed," the Committee wrote Geyer. Had Geyer made the suggestion, would not the instructions have acknowledged that fact? And had Radisson spoken of "the Boy Kelsey," would not the Committee, suspicious of the old explorer in a period of French raids, have neglected to mention his name? It is a theory only, but as good as any. The Hudson's Bay Company has been so niggardly in recognizing its heroes, no harm can be done at this late date in letting the imagination bestow a bit of credit or a touch of romance where a greed for fur has withheld it.

As a result of those instructions from London, Henry Kelsey

went northward in 1689, accompanied by Thomas Savage. A sloop took him along the coast, beyond Churchill River, but encountered ice. The captain tried to work through, and without success.

In the journal of that expedition, unknown until found in Dobbs' library, we get our first picture of the real Kelsey. Impatient, anxious to be on his way, he asked to be set ashore. He would rather trust to his legs than a clumsy sailing vessel jammed in the ice. The country he expected to visit had never been seen by white men. Its extent was undreamed of. Even the coast of the Bay to the north was scarcely known. How dangerous its inhabitants might be was a matter of conjecture.

But Kelsey went ashore. He and the Cree boy cached part of their supplies and started out across the limitless barren lands of the north.

This fact is known now, after nearly two and a half centuries, and it presents a far more inspiring picture than that of a willful lad who defied his superiors, was flogged, ran away to live with the Indians. Especially against a background of timidity and dull wit afforded by the Hudson's Bay Company men of the time, this spectacle of a boy of nineteen setting out into a great void in the world's map becomes doubly inspiring.

Until the coming of the airplane, those vast treeless plains of northern Canada remained virtually unconquered. Even today they are mapped only along the principal rivers. Not until eighty years after Kelsey's journey did a white man cross them, and then another hundred and twenty years passed before they were explored in the region Kelsey visited. In one large barren ground lake the ice does not melt in summer. Blizzards sweep the land in June, July or August. Stray musk oxen, traveling bands of caribou and fish are the only sources of food. Winter shuts in before one knows it is gone.

That is what "the boy Kelsey" dared, and he did not have only the land itself to contend with. Thomas Savage was a "Southern Indian," and in terror of the Chipewyans, or "Northern Indians," who lived far to the west and roamed the barrens. Again and again he calley Kelsey a fool for attempting such a journey. He did not want a fire built for fear it would attract strange savages. He delayed where he could, and at last, because he proved

too great an encumbrance, Kelsey turned back. He estimated that he had gone 213 miles beyond the mouth of the Churchill River.

Nothing was accomplished by Kelsey's first journey. No new trade was brought to the forts, no territory of value was discovered. Three things only are to be remarked. An English boy displayed spirit and courage where English men were afraid. A European saw a musk ox for the first time, and killed and described this northern animal. The first inland journey by an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company had been made.

In the meager notes recorded on the homeward way, Kelsey gives a hint of himself. Balked by a river, he and the Indian built a raft of what little timber they could find on the edge of the barren lands, but it could carry only one man and their possessions. The river must be crossed. The Indian was afraid. Kelsey shoved Thomas off on the raft while he himself swam the stream. He admits it was very cold.

Evidently Governor Geyer was pleased with the boy's effort. No record of Geyer's attitude exists except that in September, 1690, he reported to London that he had sent Kelsey inland with the Assiniboine Indians, who made annual journeys to Fort Nelson to trade. A year later he reported that he had received a letter from Kelsey, and in 1692 Geyer recorded that Kelsey had returned "with a good fleet of Indians."

This agrees with Kelsey's own journal, recently discovered, and that journal clears up a long controversy and gives a twenty-year-old explorer his due after nearly two and one-half centuries. The barren land expedition was remarkable. The journey inland, which began in 1690, was a big achievement. Kelsey went farther west than any white man had ever gone. He found a land beautiful in summer, rich with fur in winter, a land of plenty and of vast possibilities, and he brought back a fortune in pelts.

Though farther north, he was approximately as far west as Lewis and Clark wintered one hundred and fourteen years later. The French did not reach the same district for nearly half a century. Sixty-four years passed before another Hudson's Bay man ventured so far, and not until after eighty-four years did the

"Gentlemen Adventurers" establish a post in the land Kelsey had discovered.

A modern person can scarcely grasp the nature of a journey such as Kelsey made. Two hundred and forty years takes us back to a crude age. Firearms were heavy, cumbersome, inefficient and uncertain. Condensed and preserved food was unknown. Matches were undreamed of. Weather-proofed fabrics had not been invented.

In Kelsey's day no one had any conception of the limits of the continent. Radisson and Groseillers alone had seen the plains country. Large bands of Indians roamed a vast territory. Few of these had seen white people. Inter-tribal wars were frequent.

The Hudson's Bay Company was only twenty years old when Kelsey went inland. It had a few posts on the bay. It is doubtful if any servant or employee, Radisson excepted, ever got beyond the smell of salt spray. Indians came down with fur, and with tales of "strong rivers," vast forests and limitless plains. They arrived starving, and told of hunger deaths on the homeward way in former years, and of fierce tribal warfare.

Governors of forts were petty autocrats. No employee was permitted to speak to an Indian. Flogging was a common punishment. No man could step outside the fort gates unless sent by the governor. Within rude cabins surrounded by log pickets, the Hudson's Bay Company squatted. The picture is not pretty. The glory and adventure of that day exists only in the minds of writers who lived two centuries later.

Against such a background, Henry Kelsey stands out the more brilliantly. He furnishes the first thrill in the story of the Hudson's Bay Company.

And from that environment of timidity and inertia in the Company forts, the young man of twenty stepped into the great unknown. He cannot be called reckless or foolhardy. He had already made one difficult journey into the barren lands. He knew the Indians always starved on their way home. Yet he went with them, gladly, eagerly. He was hungry with them, toiled up the swift rivers in their canoes, tightened his girdle as they did.

The Assiniboines passed the forested belt, the vast swamp belt, emerged in the fall on the edge of the great plains, and there

Henry Kelsey attained an added distinction. He was the first Englishman to see a buffalo, the first to see a grizzly bear. He was the first Englishman to kill these animals. But many years were to pass before another Hudson's Bay employee was to see them.

For two years Kelsey lived as did the Indians, roaming plains and forests, hunting, starving, wearing leather garments, enduring constant privations. He was courageous and resourceful. Otherwise he could not have retained the respect of the natives. It was a man's world, and a savage one, and Kelsey proved himself a man.

The best evidence of this lies in nothing he wrote, for that is meager, but in what he did. In 1691 the Assiniboine Indians with whom he lived made their annual journey down to York Factory. He accompanied them only as far as Cedar Lake, on the Saskatchewan, near the modern The Pas. From there it was a short journey down to the sea, with swift currents carrying the canoes, but Kelsey did not make it. He sent a letter to Governor Geyer and remained in the wilderness until the Indians returned.

Kelsey was twenty-one years old that summer. For a year he had lived as a savage. Even the crude comforts of York Factory must have been an attraction, and the companionship of his own race must have beckoned strongly. Why he remained he does not tell. He did send for more supplies, and when they came he went back into the plains country for another winter. The next spring he brought that "good fleet of Indians." From a trader's standpoint, the first summer must have been well spent.

It is interesting to note how Kelsey won the admiration of the Indians by killing two grizzly bears, and lost credit with historians because he had done so. We always think of the grizzly as a far western animal. Historians did not know it was common even farther east than the scene of Kelsey's adventure. More than a century later fur traders found it on the Minnesota-Dakota boundary.

Modern explorers with the best of equipment, with all science has done to make life comfortable and safe in far places, cannot match Kelsey's feat, or those of Hendry and Hearne. Kelsey's youth may partly explain his audacity, but it also is a reason

for added credit. Now that this journey has become an established fact, he ranks near the top of those who have been first on this continent.

That the boy had something other than brash courage is shown by his subsequent history. In 1694 he went to London and was re-engaged at a salary of thirty pounds a year. Four years later he signed for three years at twenty-five pounds a year. The treaty of Ryswick had been made, the Company believed the French danger was passed, and cut the wage scale. But by the time the French were humbled and had submitted to the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, Kelsey had distinguished himself in the warfare on the Bay and was receiving one hundred pounds a year as deputy to Governor Knight at Fort Nelson. From 1718 to 1722 he served as Governor.

Charges were made against Kelsey and he was called home. What the charges were, is not definitely known. In 1724 he asked for command of a ship, but was refused. There is no further record of him, but in 1730 his widow asked the Company for aid and was given ten pounds, ten shillings. Four years later she asked for money to clothe the explorer's son. Big dividends were now being paid on stock twice trebled, but the "Gentlemen Adventurers" could find only six pounds, six shillings to supply her needs. But that was forty-two years after Kelsey made his remarkable journey. The Hudson's Bay Company takes a vast pride in its history and sees in the dim past an ever growing monument of glory. But it does not explain the neglect accorded its outstanding servants or the oblivion into which it permitted its real heroes to sink.

Though the Company sent Henry Kelsey on that journey, in one way it did not owe him much, for it made no use of his achievement. It is true that the French kept them busy on the shores of the Bay for a time but later, after Utrecht, no effort was made to follow up the boy's work. Despotie governors still ruled the forts. Ill-paid servants were still flogged and kept within gates. The Company now knew what lay behind, knew its business could be increased tremendously. But it made no effort to do so.

The Kelsey case is typical of Hudson's Bay neglect of its

heroes. We have already seen how, in the Dobbs controversy, the Company submitted to Parliament a bungled and incomplete journal of the youthful explorer's work. This led historians astray and the charge quite naturally arose that the journey had never been made or, if there were truth in the story, that Kelsey had not gone far.

The journal submitted by the Company started abruptly with "Deering's Point," and because of brevity and lack of detail in the writing, and the fact that nowhere else in all the literature of the north is reference made to such a place, modern writers were of the opinion that Kelsey had gone up the Nelson River, instead of the Indians' usual thoroughfare, the Hayes, and that "Deering's Point" was probably on Split Lake, on the Nelson, and not far from salt water.

With Split Lake as a starting point, subsequent details could not be made to fit modern geographical knowledge, and doubt was cast on the authenticity of the journal because of the reference to grizzly bears. Further, Kelsey's description of the country agrees with that of a region south of the Saskatchewan. It was confusing, and unexplainable. Historians have showed that they wanted to believe the Kelsey story, perhaps because of the appeal it carried—a street gamin of spirit driven from a fort by a governor who flogged subordinates, who dared where his elders cringed. But historians could not quite convince themselves.

The recently discovered journal, which was never made public by Dobbs, has a rhymed introduction not found in the Company's journal, and it also gives fuller details of the inland expedition and tells for the first time of the journey into the barren lands in 1689.

The verse with which Kelsey began his account in the Dobbs copy settles the matter of "Deering's Point," and from that place the boy's wanderings have since been traced with reasonable accuracy. The important feature of his introduction reads:

"Gott on ye borders of ye Stone Indian's country  
I took possession on ye 10. Inst. July  
And for my masters I speaking for you all  
This Neck of land I Deering's Point did call



Distant from home by Judgement at ye best  
From ye house 600 miles south west  
Through rivers wch runs strong with falls  
Thirty-three carriages five lakes in all," etc.

"Ye House," of course, means the fort at the mouth of Hayes River, York Factory, and 600 miles is approximately the distance to Cedar Lake on the Saskatchewan River just west of the north end of Lake Winnipeg. It is also in the country of the Assiniboines, the "Stone Indians," and the description accords with that of a point on the north side of the lake where the Indians had a big camp each summer.

After the discovery of the Kelsey papers in the Dobbs' library, Charles Napier Bell, who first went into the Saskatchewan country a half century ago, and who through his long connection with Canadian exploration and survey is an authority on northern geography, prepared a detailed criticism in which he is able to follow Kelsey's wanderings very closely. He believes the boy reached the great plains to the west of Lake Winnipegosis somewhere northwest of the Touchwood Hills in eastern Saskatchewan.

Arthur Dobbs gave a remarkably accurate description of that plains country, and his keen mind foresaw much of the prairie Canada of today. As Kelsey was the only white man who had ever been there when Dobbs wrote his book, it is not difficult to understand where the Company's arch foe obtained his information.

But that does not excuse the Hudson's Bay Company. Dobbs' charges were all too true. Even Kelsey's discoveries could not arouse the "Adventurers." Both Dobbs and the Company are guilty of suppressing the true story of the exploration. Upon the Hudson's Bay rests the additional guilt of making no use of the boy's journey. As the years pass in that first century, the story of the Hudson's Bay remains astoundingly free of adventure, romance, enterprise and accomplishment.

Henry Kelsey was twenty years old when he began his journey. Radisson was only twenty-four when he went west of the Mississippi a generation earlier. D'Iberville was twenty-four when he

led in the overland attack on Hudson's Bay Company forts, the beginning of one of the most romantic and spectacular careers on the continent. Samuel Hearne was twenty-four when he started his Coppermine River expedition. Anthony Hendry was a young man when he went farther westward than any Englishman had ever gone. "The smug and ancient gentlemen" of London board rooms were never adventurers. Youth alone relieved the dullness of the Company's first century.

## CHAPTER XI

Sixty-four years after Henry Kelsey began his journey, another youth wrested adventure and romance and achievement from the stolid environment which the Hudson's Bay Company had contrived for itself. But in the interval no other Englishman, young or old, ventured into the wilderness.

Failure on the part of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" to take advantage of Kelsey's work is, in a way, understandable. The Company was young. The England of that day was not an aggressive nation. For twenty-one years after Kelsey's return the Company's hold on the Bay was slight. The French occupied York Factory and there was almost constant warfare. After Utrecht, the Indians, who had been deprived of goods for some years, were only too glad to make the long journey to the sea that they might buy guns, ammunition and other commodities. Governors of Hudson's Bay posts had no desire to exert themselves. Dividends mounted, finally reached twelve per cent annually and remained there for many years.

But in 1754 when Anthony Hendry started on the dim trail left by Kelsey, an entirely different situation existed, and to understand the significance of Hendry's expedition we must learn what others than the Hudson's Bay Company had been doing in fur land.

Barred from the inland sea by the Treaty of Utrecht, the French struck westward from the Great Lakes. Even before Kelsey's time, Greysolon Du Lhut had a post on Lake Superior where Fort William was to be built by the Nor'Westers more than a century later. He pressed northward, cut off much trade bound for Hudson's Bay posts, and wrote that, even if it cost him his life, he would prevent the English from getting a single pelt. But French success in the Bay removed the necessity for extension of trade past the Great Lakes and, like the English, the

French seemed content to squat on the shores of the inland sea and let the Indians come to them.

When the Hudson's Bay Company regained possession of its posts in 1713, the French did not immediately become active beyond the Great Lakes district. They still had posts on Lake Superior and carried on a large trade that did much damage to the English. But the west end of Lake Superior is a long way from Montreal and an entire season was required to make the canoe journey out and back. It was not until 1728 that the great western adventure of the French was conceived.

In that year Pierre Gaultier de Verrennes, Sieur de La Verendrye, Canadian born but lately returned from service in European wars, was in charge of a French post on Lake Nipigon, north of Lake Superior. He heard from Indians of the vast land to the westward and decided to explore it, possibly to reach the Western Sea and be the first to cross the continent.

His subsequent activities form one of the epics of American pathfinding. His is an astounding story of perseverance, loyalty and sacrifice, but it does not belong here. The results of his work have a most important part in the story of the Hudson's Bay Company, however, and must be outlined.

Verendrye went back to Montreal to enlist aid for his enterprise and 1731 he and his sons were at Grand Portage, which a half century later was to become the first headquarters of the North West Company. Before winter they had built a fort at the west end of Rainy Lake. In 1732 they reached Lake of the Woods and in 1733 Lake Winnipeg.

Verendrye had to earn his way as he went, in trading, and his work was interrupted by this and by trips to Montreal to seek government aid, which was never forthcoming. But in 1738 a fort was built on the present site of Winnipeg and before the end of the year they had reached the Mandans on the Missouri, nearly seventy years ahead of Lewis and Clark. In 1742 and 1743 two sons of Verendrye reached the Rocky Mountains, were the first to cross the western plains. They also discovered Lake Manitoba, found the Saskatchewan about where Kelsey struck it, and established forts on Cedar Lake and at the Forks of the Saskatchewan.

Verendrye died in the west and his sons were robbed of the

fruits of their discoveries in a manner as characteristic of the New France of their day as of Radisson's. But the despoilers took advantage of their work and the French soon had a strong string of forts across the very heart of the land given to the Hudson's Bay Company by charter.

Not only were the French first to open the fur trade in the interior but they did it despite terrific odds. A geographical glimpse is necessary to understand this. Basquia, the modern The Pas, one of the most important of the French posts, was built at a strategic point on the Saskatchewan River just west of the north end of Lake Winnipeg. It is on the route by which the western Indians went to York Factory with their fur and the French could easily intercept this trade.

But Basquia was only 650 miles from York Factory by way of the Nelson River, less by the Hayes River route. The Hudson's Bay Company could have taken trade outfits to Basquia in a month. The French, however, were nearly 2,500 miles from Montreal and two summers were required to make the return journey. It was necessary to carry canoes and cargoes across countless portages, run many rapids, cross large and wind-swept lakes, if goods were to be brought to the Indians on their home grounds. Yet the French did this. They began to do it in Verendrye's time. They even went farther afield and built posts up the Saskatchewan, out on the prairies. They eliminated the necessity of an Indian making a seven-months journey to York Factory.

Quite naturally, one would imagine that the Hudson's Bay Company would take steps to counteract such inroads upon its fur receipts, that it would not only wish to save the profitable trade but would also resent this invasion of the sacred chartered land by aliens. Yet the situation presents one of the most incomprehensible features of the Hudson's Bay story. For the Company did nothing, even when dividends fell.

The inertia and timidity of Kelsey's time persisted. The record is startlingly free of achievement. In 1719 we find that Richard Norton, who afterwards became Governor of Fort Churchill, was voted fifteen pounds "for having endured great hardships traveling with the Indians." In 1733 Norton wrote to the Company in London that he had made many difficult journeys with the In-

dians to promote trade "to the hazard of my own life." Norton also made a voyage of discovery in a small vessel and explored Chesterfield Inlet.

But no record of his land journeys is known, no hint of where he went or how far. The Dobbs charges came at this time and immediately afterward but the Company did not present journals or other evidence of exploration by Norton. In meeting Dobbs' charges, chief reliance was placed on twenty to thirty orders to governors of forts that they were to press the inland trade, yet only Kelsey's journal was cited as an instance of inland exploration actually accomplished. Because of Hudson's Bay negligence in other cases, it is possible that employees made inland trips of which no record is known today. Had they done so, however, the facts surely would have been presented to Parliament.

In one respect the Company made an effort, but it was so feeble little damage was done to French trade. Beginning in 1730, when Brunswick House was established up the Moose River, the Hudson's Bay developed four inland posts. Henly House was built up the Albany about 1744, Split Lake Fort on the Nelson between 1740 and 1750, and Flamborough Factory up Hayes River about 1750. None of these forts is more than 200 miles from salt water. By this time the French had many interior posts, some nearly three thousand miles from Montreal, their nearest base of supplies. The French establishments were in the heart of the fur country. The Hudson's Bay posts were little more than gestures toward the interior.

There we have it. Eighty years after the Charter was signed, Henry Kelsey alone of all the Hudson's Bay men had penetrated to the heart of Rupert's Land, while the French knew its streams and plains, had established friendly relations with its savage people, and each year reaped a rich harvest of fur.

That was the situation when Anthony Hendry arrived at York Factory. Inevitably there was talk of the activities of the traders from New France. They were camped in the back yard of the Hudson's Bay. Their posts on the Saskatchewan, the high road to the west, intercepted Indians whose canoes, York bound, were heavily loaded with beaver and the finer furs.

But there was only talk in the Hudson's Bay posts until 1754,

when Hendry asked for permission to go inland. It would be very interesting to learn exactly how that request happened to be made, more interesting to know how Hendry's fellow servants reacted to it. We do know what happened on his return, and the incident is most revealing, and damning.

So far as present information goes, Anthony Hendry exists only in his journal and in two brief notes written thereon by Andrew Graham, afterwards in charge of Fort Severn. Graham alone, of Hudson's Bay men, has given us intimate glimpses of that period. He explains that Hendry was born on the Isle of Wight, that he was outlawed for smuggling in 1748 and that in 1750 he entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, the "directors not knowing he was under sentence for outlawry."

"This person, whom I knew well," Graham wrote, "was bold, enterprising, and voluntarily offered his services to go inland with the natives to explore the country, and to endeavor to draw down the different tribes to the Factory. Before this time none of the servants at the Factories had ventured to winter with the natives."

Far more revealing things have come from that period than this brief description of the first Englishman to venture the unknown in sixty-four years. Graham does not mention Kelsey but in saying none had ventured inland he may never have heard of the London boy of 1690. Possibly, too, he had heard of him and, as a result of the Dobbs controversy, had no faith in the Kelsey story. In any event, Graham shows there was no Kelsey legend in the service and that the boy's remarkable journey left no impress on future Hudson's Bay men.

As to Hendry, we are left with Graham's meager description and his own journal. "Bold" and "enterprising" he surely was, to offer his services where no other Hudson's Bay employee had dared. A probable explanation is that, like Kelsey, he was a "sport," one of those rare but inevitable outstanding characters found even in the most mediocre environment. Kelsey willingly accepted a mission when all his countrymen refused to stir from tide water. Hendry asked for permission to make a hazardous journey.

He went almost to the Rocky Mountains, farther than any

Englishman had ever gone, but the Company was unimpressed and quickly forgot him. It has been said that Graham was probably responsible for preserving Hendry's journal. At least Graham made marginal notes on the original copy, and as these indicate they were written much later than Hendry's day, he may have been responsible for the manuscript's reaching London.

There it lay unnoticed in the Company's vaults. George Bryce, author of the "Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company," 1900, and Beckles Willson, author of "The Great Company," 1900, were given access to the Company's records and wrote the first comprehensive accounts of the entire life of the Company. Both fail to mention Hendry. Willson especially was very much pro-Hudson's Bay. Neither would have overlooked an opportunity to give the Company credit for such a journey. Evidently they never heard of it. Now a copy of the journal is in the Canadian Archives and it was printed in the transactions of the Royal Society of Canada in 1907.

Hendry departed from York Factory on June 26, 1754, with a band of Assiniboine Indians, taking the route up the Hayes which Radisson had taken in 1682 and Kelsey in 1690, the route which later was to become the great highway of the fur trade. The journal which Hendry kept was much better written than Kelsey's. He was careful of distances and descriptions of the country, with the result that his route has been easily traced.

Like Kelsey and Hearne, Hendry traveled with Indians, ate Indian food when it was to be had, starved when there was none. He wore Indian garments of leather, lived in their teepees, became essentially one of them. No other way was possible in that time. Only the Indians knew the country. Food could not be transported such distances. And as in Kelsey's case, it was necessary that the ex-smuggler hold up his end. Women could tan leather and sew garments and pound pemmican, but men must hunt. Slackers died of starvation.

The journey began with long days of hunger. The great swamp belt about the Bay offered little game. Indians were accustomed to kill hunger pangs by smoking tobacco while pressing on as rapidly as possible to the western plains. There buffalo provided food, clothing and shelter the year round. The Assiniboines with



whom Hendry traveled were plains Indians. They did not like canoes, or the forest country. But they were clever traders, intermediates between the Hudson's Bay Company and distant tribes, such as the Blackfeet, and found it profitable to make the annual journey to salt water.

Four hundred Assiniboines comprised Hendry's party. Nearly four weeks were spent in reaching Saskatchewan to the west of Lake Winnipeg, and they were weeks of misery and toil and hunger. Mosquitoes were so troublesome Hendry named a point for the northern pests, and, incidentally, it might be stated that even a New Jersey man knows nothing of mosquitoes until he has visited the north.

The canoes traversed the swampy country of the Nelson and lower Saskatchewan and reached a spot on the last named river then known as Basquia, now as The Pas, a thriving Canadian city from which the Hudson Bay railroad goes on to Churchill, a mining and air traffic center and the scene of one of the big annual dog races. At Basquia Anthony Hendry did something which no other English fur trader had done. He visited a post of the French opponents of the Hudson's Bay Company.

The officer in charge had gone down to Montreal with the season's fur but the men he had left to guard the post were most polite. They invited Hendry to enter, asked if he had passport or credentials and then informed him they must detain him until the return of their superior. The chief of the Indians with whom Hendry traveled was amused by this and said the French dare not detain him. The savage force was too strong. The Frenchmen continued to be polite, even friendly, but they made no effort to hold the Englishman when he wished to depart.

A little way beyond Basquia the plains people abandoned their canoes and struck southwestward afoot. All summer and fall they wandered, along and across both the north and south forks of the Saskatchewan, on into the great buffalo country where starvation was seldom known and where, Hendry discovered and noted in his journal, there was no desire, or need, on the part of the Indians to trade with white men. The Blackfeet, and Hendry was the first Englishman to see this powerful tribe, explained that they never wanted food, while those Indians who went down to

the sea often died of starvation on the journey. "Which was exceedingly true," Hendry wrote.

Before he reached the country of the Blackfeet, far to the west in what is now Alberta, Hendry made another discovery. The Indians preferred to trade with the French. He made presents to their chiefs, tried to win them over. He did win some, but it was a difficult matter. The French brought trade goods from Montreal, nearly three thousand miles. An Indian need go only a short distance to exchange his pelts for what he wanted. Hendry tried to induce these tribes to make the long and difficult journey to Hudson Bay, to convince plains Indians it was to their interest to employ the unaccustomed canoe in the journey.

He could do nothing else. The fault lay with his superiors. Either in London or on the Bay, those in power preferred to remain near salt water and let the Indian do the work. Nearly two centuries later the present Prince of Wales was to tell English merchants that they did not give sufficient heed to the wishes and needs of customers in distant lands.

The large birch canoes in which the French brought their goods all the way from Montreal were a source of wonder to the Hudson's Bay man. Later those canoes, carrying Nor'Westers, were to be the scourge of the Company. In other respects Hendry was greatly impressed by the rival traders, and he wrote much that should have been of great value to his employers.

"The French speak several languages [Indian] to perfection," he once noted in his journal. "They have the advantage of us in every shape; and if they had Brazile tobacco, which they have not, would entirely cut off our trade."

Hendry spent that winter of 1754 almost within sight of the Rocky Mountains, on the plains between Calgary and Edmonton, and to the eastward. He had considerable success in dealing with the tribes he met there. When spring came he gathered a large number for the long journey to York Factory, and as the fleet of canoes went down the Saskatchewan it grew steadily. The Blackfeet were waiting, as a result of Hendry's representations to them, and turned their fur over to the Assiniboines. The explorer-trader wrote that in this meeting with the Blackfeet the

Assiniboines traded nearly all they had, and went on without a kettle in the sixty canoes.

Except for portages, it was a straight water journey from the wintering places to York Factory. Pemmican had been provided. The current was always with the canoes, and those canoes were laden with a rich harvest of fur for the Hudson's Bay Company. Hendry had done exceedingly well.

But above Basquia they came to a French post, and the French were still polite. They invited Hendry to dine and, while the Englishman ate, his hosts distributed ten gallons of brandy among the Indians. For three days the savages were drunk and would not go on. They traded more than a thousand of their finest pelts to the French. Hendry was helpless.

Another run down stream brought the great fleet of canoes to Basquia. Here nine Frenchmen were present, and again Hendry was powerless to combat both suavity and brandy. The Englishman wrote that the leader of the French was very kind and was "dressed very genteel," but that the Indians were all drunk. The district of which The Pas is the center was to become accustomed to such scenes. Nor'Westers and Hudson's Bay men fought it out there for fifty years, and used ship loads of alcohol in efforts to win the Indians. Now, in the first of such encounters, a Hudson's Bay man was powerless, and easily defeated. For four days the Indians remained drunk, and when at last Hendry could get them started for York Factory, all the fine furs had gone to the French. The English had to be content with the heavier, coarser varieties which at last reached the sea.

Because he followed in Kelsey's footsteps, Hendry's journey has not been ranked with that of the boy from London. But Hendry went much farther. He was probably a better trader, and he wrote a better description of the country. As to courage and daring, Kelsey required more to start, for no white man had been in the west in his day. Hendry went through a land already known to the French.

Nevertheless, his journey is remarkable when considered in relation to the attitude of his superiors, and it becomes truly astounding when the climax is reached. Hendry's story of his ex-

periences was not believed, he was refused permission to return to the interior, all because he reported that he had found Indians riding on horses.

Nothing in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company is more inexplicable, and nothing more indicative. The "Gentlemen Adventurers" had been trading on the Bay for eighty-five years. They had let the Radisson chance, and the Kelsey chance, slip by without action. Now, with the French pressing them hard, with dividends dropping, they laughed Anthony Hendry out of the service. The young explorer left in disgust. The Governor and Committee in London voted him twenty pounds as a gratuity for twelve months of hardship, as payment for priceless information about the interior and the successful methods of energetic opponents. The first Englishman to cross the plains dropped into oblivion.

Andrew Graham, in his notes on the Hendry journal, has given us a bare glimpse of what happened. "The accounts of horsemen being inland were not credited. He, Hendry, was misrepresented by those in the Bay who were not acting a just part to the Company, and he perceiving not likely to meet with promotion he had so deservedly merited, quitted the Company's service. Which made one of the directors say afterward, 'That a valuable servant oftentimes was not known until lost.'"

In another place Graham made this note: "I knew this man; he was a bold and good servant and was drove from the Company's service by the ships gentry because he would not buy slops and brandy from them. He was the first person who ventured inland. I was the writer at York Fort."

Historians shift the blame for the treatment of Hendry from London officials to governors on the Bay. They say the little potentates in the rude forts did not wish to go inland, as Hendry's discoveries would have compelled them to do. But that is only diverting the issue.<sup>1</sup> The facts remain that Hendry was called a liar because of his horsemen story, that he was not permitted to return to the interior/ that his year of privation and danger and loyalty was valued at just one hundred dollars,/ and that the Hudson's Bay Company made no effort to follow up his work and

counteract the French influence that was growing so rapidly in the very center of Prince Rupert's land. /

Adventure! Romance! Courage! Daring! Enterprise! Spread of British trade and influence! Saving Canada for the Empire! All this is trumpeted in behalf of the Hudson's Bay Company. But Indians on horseback!

## CHAPTER XII

Samuel Hearne reached the mouth of Coppermine River in 1771, when the Hudson's Bay Company was one hundred and one years old, and in the first century of the Company's existence Hearne furnishes the only example, so far as is known, of that dogged loyalty and devotion which long afterward was to characterize the service and provided a quality of pure beauty.

Kelsey and Hendry were adventurers, swayed by youth and romance. Hearne was a steady, reliable plodder, without fire and without deceit. He accepted orders. He put the job through. He won the respect of his employers. His memory has survived not so much because of a notable achievement as because of the manner in which he achieved.

Of the three English youths who alone of all their countrymen on the Bay in that first century had the spirit to dare the unknown, Samuel Hearne stands in the front. This is not altogether due to the wider publicity his journey has had, or to his own accurate and interesting book. Hearne's difficulties were greater. He did not traverse the western plains, a land of plenty in buffalo days, but the dreaded barren grounds of the north. He crossed the Arctic circle, was the first white man to reach the Arctic Ocean by land on this continent.

Today prosperous cities and farms cover much of the territory discovered by Kelsey and Hendry. Railroads thread the prairies. Vast fields of wheat spread where the buffalo ranged. Hearne crossed a land so barren and so desolate it still remains essentially unknown. Not a dozen white men saw it until the airplane cut the terrific distances to hours and spread prospectors across it on the same mission that sent Hearne out on foot a century and a half earlier.

But most of all it is Hearne's spirit that has survived. It foreshadowed what was to come in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. It gives us our first glimpse of what we have been

searching for so long, of what ultimately was to be the crowning characteristic of the world's most remarkable commercial organization.

Materially, Hearne accomplished nothing. His own modest and accurate summary is found in the book he left us. "Though my discoveries are not likely to prove of any material advantage to the nation at large, or indeed to the Hudson's Bay Company . . . it has put a final end to all disputes concerning a northwest passage through the Hudson Bay."

Hearne was right. As with Kelsey and Hendry, the Company did not extend its trade through his discoveries. It did silence its critics, though a generation after those critics had made their charges. And as with Captain Knight's tragic voyage, mineral wealth and not geographical knowledge was the primary reason for the expedition.

None of this touches Hearne, however. Like Kelsey and Hendry, the man rose above his environment and his time, above his employers. He made one of the most remarkable journeys ever attempted on the North American continent, he endured thirty months of privation difficult for modern man to comprehend, and he wrote an account of his work which remains today a noteworthy and absorbing story of exploration. It was translated into French and German. In recent times it was edited with valuable notes by J. B. Tyrrell, who one hundred and twenty years later was the first white man to revisit the land found by Hearne on his second trip.

Hearne's character is startling when compared with what we have been accustomed to in the first century of the Hudson's Bay Company. Men from the Orkney Islands had been introduced in the service before his time but neither they nor the English servants distinguished themselves. Sir Charles Piers, who has been assembling a historical museum for the Company and has delved into its past, recently told the British Columbia Historical Society that the early recruits were from the south of England and slow, unimaginative men. Nothing they did gives a glimpse of the qualities necessary for Hearne's work.

Strangely enough, Hearne was not a landsman. His father, who held a civil position in England, died when Samuel was

young and the widowed mother placed the boy in a private school. He was bright enough, but he would not study and at his own request he joined the navy when eleven years old. After several years he resigned to enter the services of the Hudson's Bay Company and it is known that he was in the Bay in 1766 as mate of a vessel.

The Company maintained a whale fishery in the north end of the Bay and Hearne was an officer in one of its ships. It was he who found the old Eskimo whose story explained the fate of the Knight expedition. Nothing of Hearne's early work for the Company has been recorded, but he must have been an efficient young officer to be selected for the Coppermine expedition. And as he cleared up the Knight mystery in the summer of 1769 and began his exploration that fall, it seems certain that he had no land experience before being chosen.

Copper was responsible for the Hearne expedition. His instructions read that he was to attempt to discover the "North West Passage and copper mines." Hudson's Bay instructions seldom failed to mention the passage. It helped when Parliamentary committees asked questions. Captain Knight was formally commanded to seek it, and carried iron-bound chests to bring back the gold he was really looking for.

Since the Hudson's Bay Company first got in touch with the "Northern Indians," or Chipewyans, who came to the mouth of the Churchill River to trade, it was known that copper existed somewhere in the interior. The natives used it for ornaments and utensils and told that they got it on the banks of a "Far Away Metal River." But for nearly eighty years the Company did nothing toward finding it.

In 1768 "Northern Indians" brought pieces of metal to Fort Churchill. The governor, Moses Norton, halfbreed son of an Englishman who once was governor of the fort, went to England that year and laid the matter before the Company. The Committee determined to act on the governor's suggestion and drew up instructions which Norton took back to the Bay with him in 1769.

Governor Norton suggested Hearne for the task and the Company designated him. The fact that the young seaman, then only twenty-four years old, was selected is undoubtedly due to two



factors. Being a seaman, he understood astronomy, could determine his position on the earth's surface with a sextant, something employees of the Company on land could not do. But Hearne's character must have had much to do with the choice. Norton must have discovered qualities in the man which indicated an ability to put through such a task. At least no landsman on the Bay had proved his fitness for exploration.

The motive back of the expedition is clear. Indians had told much of the "Far Away Metal River" at Fort Churchill, and Hudson's Bay officials knew it lay to the northwest a great distance and that it flowed into a large "salt lake" in which tides rose and fell. That meant the ocean, though which ocean was not certain as the extent of the continent was unknown. It is conceivable that Norton and other officials realized that if a man walked to the mouth of this river he would demonstrate thereby that no Northwest Passage existed. But it was the fresh report of copper, and pieces of it brought by an Indian leader named Matonobbee, that aroused Norton's interest.

Governor Norton wrote minute instructions to Hearne and on November 6, 1769, the young seaman left the fort, cheered by the post's people and saluted with a discharge of cannon. He was accompanied by two white men, two "home guard" Indians, or Crees, and a band of Chipewyans, men and women.

November means severe weather as far north as Fort Churchill, and the explorer suffered much, and also uncovered trouble. Because his white servants were "common men," they were treated so badly by the Indians Hearne feared they would starve. Nor was Hearne himself able to do much better. On November 29 the Chipewyan chief induced some of his own men to desert, and to take most of Hearne's supplies with them.

Hearne, though mate on a whaling ship, was not the dominant, forceful character needed in such a situation. Might rules an Indian. He bows to nothing else. In two and a half years with the savage men of the barren grounds, Hearne never compelled, never demanded. He endured, stuck through privations and horror, kept on regardless of defeat, and in the end he won. He compels admiration through the singleness of his purpose and his unfaltering persistence.

When the Indians robbed and deserted him, he immediately turned back to Fort Churchill, suffering from hunger and exposure on the way, reaching it December 11, "to my own great mortification, and to the no small surprise of the Governor."

But Hearne was eager to make a fresh start. Moses Norton was willing, but he suggested that more Indians be taken, and no women. Hearne wrote that, though this was Norton's plan, the governor knew only too well such a journey could not be made without the assistance of the Chipewyans' many wives. Norton prevailed, however, and on February 23, 1770, in the worst month of the north's terrible winters, the patient, dogged young seaman set out again.

The two white men with Hearne had seen all they wished of the north, and Hearne was through with them and the Crees. He was accompanied now only by Chipewyans, and from the first he and his companions suffered from the cold and starvation. He wrote:

"Sometimes we had too much, seldom just enough, frequently too little, and often none at all. We have fasted many times two whole days and nights, twice upwards of three days; and once near seven days, during which time we tasted not a mouthful of anything, except a few cranberries, water, scraps of old leather, and burnt bones."

Hearne marveled at the cheerfulness of the Indians under such circumstances. They joked about hunger and its effects and lay shivering in their skin tents until the weather moderated and they were permitted to hunt. But starving never taught the Indians a lesson. When a fast ended and meat was plenty, the savages gorged, eating until the supply was exhausted or they rolled on the ground in agony.

Again Hearne failed to dominate his companions. The chief of the band and his men demanded payment for everything they gave him. Hearne carried presents for the Copper Indians, people far to the west who had never traded with white men, and these had to go. The chief, too, began to travel in a circle, offering excuses, causing delays. Summer came, and they were a long way from Coppermine River.

Then, on August 11, 1770, a gust of wind blew down the quad-

rant stand on which Hearne had set his sextant for an observation. The instrument, sent out from England for the expedition, was broken beyond repair, and because Hearne could not determine his position without a sextant, he decided to return to Fort Churchill.

The next day more misfortune came. A band of strange Indians appeared and, with only a show of politeness, they plundered the white man of all his possessions. He saved one of his two razors, and little else.

The homeward journey began. Indians had no respect for a man, white or red, who did not protect himself, and Hearne suffered much. Snow came, and on September 17th he was left behind because he had no snowshoes and could not keep up with the Indians.

Three days later, as Hearne plodded alone across the barren grounds, hungry and cold and in real danger of perishing, he was overtaken by the Chipewyan chief, Matonabbee. Not only was Hearne's life saved by this chance meeting but the final success of the expedition was assured. Without Matonabbee, the Coppermine River would not have been discovered in Hearne's day.

Matonabbee, as a boy, had lived at Fort Churchill. He was unusually tall for a "Northern Indian," nearly six feet, a man who carried himself like a chief. In Hearne's sketch of him, we find the Indian of romance but rarely of fact, a man who kept his promises, possessed qualities of true leadership and would fit perfectly into any idealized story of the savage red man. Undoubtedly he was an exception and much as Hearne sketched him. His boyhood at the fort had developed an admiration for the white traders, an admiration that finally resulted in his death. He learned English and the language of the "Southern Indians," the home guard Crees, and was of great service to the Hudson's Bay Company in bringing tribes to Churchill to trade.

It was on information brought to the fort by Matonabbee in 1768 that Norton's interest in copper had been aroused. Matonabbee had been as far as the rumored mines, had seen the metal, and when he found Hearne wandering alone on the barren grounds he immediately offered to act as guide if Governor Norton would employ him. He also explained to Hearne that it was folly to

attempt such an expedition without women. Women, he said, were designed for no other purpose. They carried burdens, made camp, cooked food, tanned skins and sewed garments. And in starving times, Matonabee pointed out, a woman could continue to toil, and live, by merely licking her fingers after wiping out a kettle the men had emptied.

Matonabee immediately took Hearne under his wing, feeding him and giving him advice, and on November 25, 1770, they arrived at Fort Churchill. Hearne had been absent, on this second expedition, eight months and twenty-two days.

If ever a man were justified in abandoning an enterprise, it was Hearne at this moment. The Arctic regions are a paradise today, with modern equipment and knowledge, compared to the barren grounds in Hearne's time. He lived in the savage way, suffered more than the savages because he was not born to it. He knew starving times, one of seven days, and he understood thoroughly what he must suffer if he were to start out again. The conditions were truly appalling, and yet Hearne voluntarily offered to make a fresh start at once.

Governor Norton was in a bad humor after this second ignominious return. He had suggested the expedition to the Company in the summer of 1768, and now, more than two years later, nothing had been accomplished. He had selected the Indians to accompany Hearne in the two unsuccessful attempts and now he insisted upon assigning some of the same Indians, his relatives, to the party.

That stubborn purpose of the explorer came to the top. Hearne would let the Indians rob him and belittle him but always beneath that softness was a determination to accomplish his purpose. Now he refused to accept any of the men Governor Norton insisted upon, "and by so doing, offended Mr. Norton to such a degree, that neither time nor absence could ever afterward eradicate his dislike of me; so that on my return he used every means in his power to treat me ill, and to render my life unhappy." Hearne adds, however, that the Governor did not let this "interfere with public business."

In a footnote, Hearne leaves a description of Norton which gives a good insight into the character of the petty tyrants the

Hudson's Bay Company placed in charge of the fur trade. Norton was a halfbreed, which sets him somewhat apart from the English officials, but his conduct discloses the power given to the governors over employees in the desolate, winter-besieged posts and permits a better understanding of the sloth and inertia which characterized the first century of the Company's existence.

Norton's father, an Englishman, had risen from the ranks to become governor of a fort. He married an Indian woman and his son, Moses, was sent to England to be educated. Hearne says Moses Norton made some progress in literature but that, on his return to the Bay, he "entered into all the abominable vices of his countrymen."

Upon his becoming governor of Fort Churchill, though he had an English wife, he assembled a number of Indian women in a barren land harem, settled them in richly furnished quarters and lived the life of an Oriental potentate in the far, bleak northland. Hearne says that he poisoned two of his women, while the Indians feared and respected him because of the power he wielded. He favored Indians over his subordinates, and it was his custom to deliver long lectures on morality to the staff, without ever practicing what he preached.

"He was a notorious smuggler," Hearne wrote, "but though he put many thousands into the pockets of the captains, he seldom put a shilling into his own."

Moses Norton died on December 29, 1773, not long after Hearne's return from the Coppermine, and Hearne left a vivid picture of the passing of the despot. Hearne says he died "of inflammation of the bowels, in excruciating pain," and in his last hours had gathered the staff and his women about him. As he lay in bed he saw an officer "lay hold of the hand of one of his women."

The old governor sprang up in bed, shouting, "'God d—n you for a b—h, if I live I'll knock out your brains.' A few minutes after making this elegant apostrophe, he expired in the greatest agonies than can possibly be imagined."

"This I declare to be the real character and manner of life of the late Mr. Moses Norton," Hearne concludes his description of the governor.

Hearne and Matonabee prevailed in their ideas for the third expedition. They refused to take the Indians selected by Governor Norton and they insisted on taking women. Matonabee had half a dozen wives, his own Indians were also well supplied, and on December 7, 1770, only twelve days after his arrival and in the middle of winter, Hearne set out a third time in the search for the "Far Away Metal River."

Matonabee did not strike into the barren grounds, as had the former Indian leaders, but kept to the edge of the forest where fuel was to be had, and protection from the bitter winds. Even then, they suffered much from the cold and from starvation. Hearne, who wrote fully of his experiences and has left us an excellent account of the Chipewyans and their mode of life, found time even in that terrible winter to record interesting matters. And he seems to have acquired something of the Indians' attitude toward hardship when, in telling of crossing a barren ground lake in bitter February weather, he wrote:

"Several of the Indians were much frozen, but none of them more disagreeably than one of Matonabee's wives, whose thighs and buttocks were in a manner encrusted with frost, and when thawed several large blisters arose, nearly as large as sheep's bladders. The pain the poor woman suffered on this occasion was greatly aggravated by the laughter and jeering of her companions, who said she was rightly served for belting her clothes too high. I must acknowledge that I was not in the number of those who pitied her, as I thought she took too much pains to shew a clean heel and a good leg; her garter being always in sight, which, though by no means considered here as bordering on indecency, is by far too airy to withstand the rigorous cold of a severe winter in a high northern latitude. I doubt not that the laughter of her companions was excited by similar ideas."

Hearne observed and wrote accurately. He prepared for the expedition as no previous explorer had done. He mapped out the known coast of Hudson Bay on parchment before starting, and drew in the latitude and longitude lines and filled in the blank spaces as he traveled. For more than a hundred years there was no other map of that vast district, except where Sir John Franklin skirted it on the east and Lieut. George Back crossed it in his

journey down the Great Fish River, which now bears Back's name.

Indian thought, habits, beliefs and manners were recorded by the young English seaman. He noted plants and animals, gave the first attention to them in the scientific manner. He wrote well, and with restraint, and a glance between the lines gives a convincing idea of the man's character.

Under Matonabee's guidance, the expedition progressed with no more than the usual delays occasioned by weather and the necessary hunting for food. When the brief summer came to the barren grounds, Hearne was north of Great Slave Lake. Wandering bands of Indians were encountered, and the party increased. As the objective became known, a growing excitement swept the camp. The mouth of the Coppermine River lay in Eskimo country, and the Chipewyan Indians decided to combine the pleasures of warfare with the business at hand.

Hearne tried to stop this plan but his arguments meant nothing to the Indians. They could not understand him. Savage brutalities of war entered too deeply into their natures. Sentiment could not sway them. They probably considered Hearne daft.

The women were left behind now, and the war party swept northward across the great barrens. A canoe was carried for use as a ferry when rivers barred the way. Small hewed staves would serve as tent poles, and as snowshoe frames on the return. Shields were made and spears sharpened. Dog Rib and Copper Indians, none of whom had ever seen white men, were encountered, and some joined in pursuit of Eskimos.

The Coppermine River was reached at last, and the party started downstream. Scouts were sent ahead. The Arctic Circle was crossed and the sun no longer set. The scouts returned and reported an encampment of Eskimos at a cataract not far from the sea which to this day is known as Bloody Falls. Preparations for the attack were made, and in the Indian manner of security for himself. Indian bravery is a matter of romance or of desperation. The red man always sought the long chance. There was no sporting blood in his veins. The fifty or more savages who accompanied Hearne planned to attack the Eskimos, numbering only twenty men, women and children, while they slept.

Hearne's efforts to avert the massacre were in vain. The Indians laughed at him. They crept up close, charged in upon their sleeping victims, and the slaughter began. One girl of eighteen fell at Hearne's feet, and while she twisted about his legs, and while he pleaded for her life, the Indians pierced her body again and again with their spears. Years afterwards, Hearne wrote, "Even at this hour I cannot reflect on the transactions of that horrid day without shedding tears."

Another band of Eskimos, encamped across the river and hidden by a cliff from the scouts, escaped to a gravel bar in the river, but the Indians wrecked tents and equipment and destroyed all the food the Arctic natives had gathered.

Immediately after the massacre, the Indians accompanied Hearne while he completed his survey to the mouth of the river, only a few miles beyond, and on July 18, 1771, the entire party started back, rejoining the women where they had been left far to the south and continuing on into the forested country. On January 9, 1772, they finished the crossing of what Hearne called "Athapuscow Lake," the Great Slave Lake of modern times. Hearne was the first white man to see this big body of water. Only a few years later the country south of Great Slave Lake was to be the seat of the Nor'Westers' power, a district in which the Hudson's Bay Company continually met defeat. Hearne went up the east bank of the Great Slave River for a short distance, then struck straight eastward to Fort Churchill. In less than twenty years the Nor'Westers were building posts in the land he found. The Hudson's Bay Company did nothing to follow up Hearne's discoveries.

Copper? Hearne found what the Indians said were the mines, but little copper. The poor specimens he could carry back never aroused the interest of his employers. In 1805 the Hudson's Bay Company presented them to the British Museum. But Hearne had killed the idea of a Northwest Passage out of Hudson Bay, and with that the Company was content. He wrote a report and sent it to London, but not until after Hearne himself returned to England was the story published a quarter of a century later.

When Hearne reached Fort Churchill on June 30, 1772, he had been absent eighteen months and twenty-three days. Since the



start of his first expedition, and he had been in the wilderness practically ever since, two years, seven months and twenty-four days had elapsed. Few explorers have ever spent so long a time in the field under such conditions.

Whether the Hudson's Bay Company had become more generous or was grateful to have the vexed Northwest-Passage question solved, we do not know, but seventeen years after it had given a gratuity of twenty pounds to Anthony Hendry for a journey of far greater consequence to the fur trade, Hearne was voted a present, said to have been two hundred pounds, and his salary was raised to one hundred and thirty pounds a year. He was also given ten pounds a year for a valet.

Perhaps Hearne had a valet, but the idea, associated with a man who had just returned from two and a half years of life with savages, seems more indicative of the strange and inconsequential things the "Gentlemen Adventurers" were accustomed to do. Until the Nor'Westers compelled it, they never gave much evidence of an accurate knowledge of conditions in America. If a shareholder in London found need for a valet, why should not a man in the wilds of America? That reasoning was typical of the "Gentlemen Adventurers."

## CHAPTER XIII

Samuel Hearne bridged a transition period in the story of the Hudson's Bay Company. He entered the service when it was characterized by inertia, lack of vision and temerity. He furnishes the first known example of that loyalty which much later was to become the Company's chief glory. He pioneered in the ultimate extension of trade into the heart of Rupert's Land, and he was long a governor of Fort Churchill.

That period was a momentous one for the "Gentlemen Adventurers." Even before Hearne began his search for the Coppermine River in 1769, a new factor had entered the fur trade. With the fall of Quebec in 1759 and of Montreal the following year, French power in Canada was broken. But in the withdrawal of the French a movement began which ultimately was to bring the Hudson's Bay Company close to bankruptcy, debauch the Indians through thousands of miles of wilderness and almost ruin the fur trade.

As early as 1767, British traders from Montreal had reached the Saskatchewan. They met the Indians, York-bound, where Kelsey had pioneered and where Hendry had been a victim of the French. These British traders bought large quantities of fur for which the Hudson's Bay Company was confidently waiting. They operated in the very heart of the chartered land, but when Hearne returned from the Coppermine in 1772 the "Gentlemen Adventurers" had taken no effective steps to thwart this new attack.

Hearne was selected to lead the first counter movement, to build the first Hudson's Bay post in the interior of Canada, but that was his sole contribution to the new movement, as he was sent elsewhere. And the story of those pioneer British traders belongs in another chapter. For the moment, we are concerned with Hearne's career.

Immediately after completing his long and hazardous expedi-

tion, he sent a report of his discoveries to the Hudson's Bay Company in London. "The old Worthies," as Dobbs called the Governor and Committee, undoubtedly were disappointed in not possessing a rich mine but they must have rejoiced in the geographical significance of that report. For it proved that no salt water passage to the westward was to be had out of Hudson Bay. No longer could critics accuse them of having neglected to explore.

But effects of the Dobbs agitation had not been entirely dissipated by time, nor had Dobbs' charges that the Company's word was questionable been forgotten, and Hearne's claims were immediately attacked. Chief doubts as to the truth of his story were raised by Alexander Dalrymple, leading geographer of his time. By chance, Dalrymple uncovered an error. Hearne placed the mouth of the Coppermine in latitude 71 degrees, 54 minutes. Subsequent surveys have shown it to be about 68, but Dalrymple based his objections on the presence of plant life which had not been found in the same latitude in Greenland. Hearne answered Dalrymple in his book and to the end he believed he was right. He carried to his grave a deep sense of injury.

Those who attack Hearne's surveying are the sort who have no conception of privation and no charity for hardship. In Hearne's case it must be remembered that he reached the mouth of the river only a few hours after the horrors of Bloody Falls. For months he had tramped the barren grounds, in blizzards and in intense cold, with a band of wandering savages. The wonder is that he mapped so accurately as he did.

As to the error in latitude, Hearne is partly excused. He was equipped with the latest sextant in 1769 but it was broken when blown down by the wind on his second journey. When he started a third time he had only an antiquated instrument found at Fort Churchill, one which was neither accurately nor efficiently made.

Some historians have blamed Hearne for permitting the massacre of the Eskimos, another case of library authorities discussing something of which they know little. The white man has never lived who could have controlled the Chipewyans when they got scent of their ancient enemies.

Poor Hearne was to be censured by historians for still another act. While he was establishing the Company's first inland post,

Cumberland House, he received orders to go to Fort Churchill and succeed Moses Norton as governor. He thus returned in power to the place where the halfbreed potentate, now dead, "used every means in his power to treat me ill, and to render my life unhappy."

For eight years Hearne remained in charge at Churchill, then known as Fort Prince of Wales. Little is recorded of those years, though the Canadians were cutting into Churchill fur receipts by intercepting the Chipewyan Indians on the upper reaches of the river. While Hearne was governor, a simple fraud was practiced on the Indians, as will be told later, but it sounds far more like Moses Norton and his methods than anything Hearne would have instigated.

In August, 1782, catastrophe struck from a wholly unexpected quarter. A fleet appeared off the mouth of Churchill River. The ships were anchored five miles from shore and the fact that they did not display the secret signals of the Company told that they were not Hudson's Bay vessels.

Governor Hearne was not alarmed. No man could remember when raiders had entered the Bay. No word of war had reached the wilderness fort. Matonabee, Hearne's old friend and guide, was at the post and Hearne was busy trading with the Indians. He did not worry and that night he went to bed as usual.

At three o'clock in the morning Hearne was wakened and told that four hundred marines were marching upon the fort. He ran out to meet them, and to discover that fleet and soldiers were French, that France and England were at war.

Fort Prince of Wales was the Company's pride in America. Its walls of masonry were from thirty-seven to forty-two feet thick at the base and sixteen feet high. Many years had been spent in the building and it was considered impregnable with its forty big guns.

British writers have censured Hearne for surrendering without a show of resistance. It seems like another case of library critics actuated by national pride. The Company had built a magnificent fort, but it had not placed a garrison in it. Hearne did not even have one man for each gun. His entire force numbered thirty-nine, the French four hundred. Comte Jean-Francois La Perouse, fa-

mous naval officer and explorer, was in command of the attacking force. Resistance would have made good reading today, and would have been folly at the time.

Hearne was also blamed for not sending some one overland to warn York Factory, on Hayes River, but he was caught wholly by surprise and could not act. He and his officers were taken prisoner aboard the French ships, the fort was plundered, its buildings burned, and the French soldiers tried ineffectually to destroy the great stone walls.

Matonabee, who had been brought up at the fort and believed his English friends were invincible, was so overcome by the surrender that he hung himself, affording one of the rare instances of an Indian suicide. Hearne records that, as a result of the chief's death, six of his wives and four of his children starved to death in the following winter.

In a footnote in his book, Hearne tells how the death of Marie Norton, daughter of Moses Norton, resulted from the surrender. The girl was reared at Prince of Wales and the young explorer's words display his astonishment at the growth of a lily in a dung heap. No heroine of fiction was ever accorded more purity or virtue than this daughter of the halfbreed governor who poisoned women in his harem. So protected was Marie's life, Hearne says, she was helpless when the French captured the fort and, on fleeing into the forest to escape the soldiers, she perished from the unaccustomed privations.

La Perouse sailed at once down the coast to York Factory on Hayes River. Hearne had surveyed and charted the site of this fort, and the French, finding the maps in Churchill, decided to enter the Nelson and attack from the rear, and by land.

Edward Umfreville, a Hudson's Bay Company employee, who later left the service and joined that of the Nor'Westers, and who wrote a book on his experiences with both Companies, was in York Factory when the French appeared. He has left an account of what happened.

Umfreville says the fort was well supplied with food and that thirty cattle were within the gates. A brook flowed through and afforded plenty of fresh water. Sixty Englishmen and twelve Indians were available for defense and willing to resist. They had

twenty-five cannon and a dozen swivel guns, besides small arms. They had ample warning of the approach of La Perouse as a Company ship saw the French fleet and gave the alarm.

Moreover, the enemy ships were twenty miles from land, hanging off the wide shoals and riding a rough sea. The shore expedition, Umfreville says, was thus cut off from the fleet and was without supplies. The weather was bad and the French marines were suffering from cold and hunger. "The factory was not in want of a single thing to withstand siege. The people showed no fear but the reverse. Yet the English governor surrendered without firing a gun."

This was the last conflict between the French and the Hudson's Bay Company. The struggle began in 1682 when Radisson's cleverness made dupes of the English at the same spot. And it ended where it began, exactly one hundred years later, in equal ignominy for the "Gentlemen Adventurers." During that century interval there is little of the struggle to which the Company can point with pride. Always there was the tone of comic opera, sometimes of farce, in its defense of the chartered land.

Unlike earlier attacks on Bay forts, this last foray of the French did not culminate in occupation. La Perouse merely sought to injure the enemy, and he destroyed the forts, took the fur and supplies and sailed away with the Company officers as prisoners. Later they were ransomed for large sums.

Nor did treachery and harshness characterize the French action, as in earlier forays. La Perouse, who was to die while leading the first really scientific expedition to encircle the globe, was much interested in Hearne's notes and journals of the Coppermine River journey. He captured them at Churchill and, after reading them on the voyage to France, returned them to the author on condition that Hearne promise to publish an account of his discoveries at once. Science made brothers of the enemies, though later La Perouse was to complain that Hearne did not keep his promise.

Hearne was ransomed that winter, with Humphrey Marten, governor of York Factory, and both men, despite their surrenders, were at once sent back to the Bay. Hearne remained in charge of Fort Churchill until 1787, when he retired and went to England.

He died in 1792. His book was published in 1795, many years after the promise to La Perouse.

We have seen how Kelsey's true journal was lost, how Hendry was driven out of the service, and how Hearne's work has lived because he himself prepared a full account of it. No other journeys of any consequence are known in that first century of the Company's existence.

The question immediately arises: How many deeds of daring, of courage and of accomplishment, were buried forever by the "Gentlemen Adventurers"? That blind, stubborn policy of secrecy, that lack of vision, of fairness, of patriotism, even of common business energy, which is so typical of the early Hudson's Bay Company, probably has something to answer for that we do not suspect. It hardly seems possible that in one hundred years only three Englishmen had sufficient courage and desire for adventure to break away from the rim of Hudson Bay and learn what lay beyond.

But there the record stands. Perhaps in some library like that of Dobbs, perhaps in some priceless journal sold to tradesmen for waste paper and now hiding in an English vault or attic, there exists another saga of youthful daring and discovery, of that "British pluck" of which we hear so much, and which is so sadly lacking in the early story of the Hudson's Bay Company.

## CHAPTER XIV

In all that has been written about the Hudson's Bay Company the assumption is universal that the organization of today is that to which Charles II granted a charter two and a half centuries ago, that the Company has persisted as a unit, that its descent can be traced in an unbroken line.

Yet there is no trace of similarity between the Hudson's Bay Company of Hearne in 1775 and that of 1825. The Hudson's Bay Company achieved greatness, power and monopoly. It was a marvelously efficient machine. It was actuated by a spirit of devotion and loyalty unknown in any other commercial organization in the world's history. But it was not the Company that laughed at Hendry's story of Indians on horseback.

The Hudson's Bay Company of 1825 excites our admiration. It was a thing of energy, of romance, of adventure, of fierce allegiance, of accomplishment, of amazing precision, of enterprise, but it was by no means the Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay. It was still British, but Scotch rather than of England. It was, in all essential respects, the North West Company of Montreal.

Not in personnel, in organization, in energy, in method or in aim, did the old Hudson's Bay Company of Hearne's day contribute to the fusion of 1821. The charter and the name have been handed down from Charles II. The force and ambition, the type of employee, the manner of conducting the fur trade, the policy, the internal government, all the qualities and methods which brought greatness, these were contributed or instigated by the Nor'Westers.

It is heresy to make such a statement. Some writers even go so far as to say the Hudson's Bay Company "absorbed" the North West Company. In 1930 George W. Allen, head of the Canadian Committee of the Company, used that expression in a lecture in Victoria, B. C. But in his audience was a man who had entered the service a half century ago as a boy, a grandson of the greatest



administrative genius fur land has known, Sir George Simpson. This old time servant, who knew the Company from the inside, who understood its spirit and had been schooled by those whose memory went back to the first days of glorious achievement, fairly boiled in his seat. He was prevented from making a hot retort by other scheduled speakers but afterward in the lobby he voiced his opinion in no uncertain terms.

"The Hudson's Bay Company never amounted to a damn until the North West Company joined it."

He is not alone in this opinion. Men of his type and time knew what they were talking about. They saw glory in the making. They understood its roots. They handed down, in lonely posts, the spirit that made possible the greatness of the Hudson's Bay. Bearded veterans imparted that spirit to boys fresh from Scotland. Those lonely posts were monasteries. Those men were dedicated to an ideal. Those boys were neophytes.

Poor old Andrew Graham, back in Hendry's day, might have been one of them, but Moses Norton with his harem and his smuggling, Hendry's chief with his fear of the land over which he was placed to rule, "the Old Worthies" sitting safely and smugly in London board rooms, they could never have entered that charmed circle. Nothing in the Hudson's Bay Company of their time contributed to the greatness that was to come.

To understand that greatness we must leave London, leave Hudson Bay itself, and look elsewhere. Why historians have not done so is inexplicable. Invariably they have been British, swayed by tradition, by precedent and by a sense of order and of continuity. Drama and achievement can go by the board so long as institutions are preserved. The raw fresh energy so distinctive of this continent carried no appeal to them. The printed word has chronicled achievement and neglected to give credit.

In this story an attempt will be made to gain a true perspective, to recognize dominant forces and to seek the true trail by which the present Hudson's Bay Company climbed. Bias, mostly national or sectional, sometimes racial, has influenced nearly everything that has been written about the Company. Perhaps by standing a little further away we can see the past in its just proportions.

First of all, we must understand that commercial and political conditions had changed vastly since the time of Charles II. Men were beginning to make things in quantity, and men were beginning to express themselves on matters of government. The population on the American continent was increasing and demanding more goods. England began to meet that need and lay the foundation for its commercial greatness. But the American population was also developing a political ideal and demanding freedom from restriction.

Results of these changing conditions were that England was able to sell goods in America for one-half the cost of goods produced in France, a tremendous commercial advantage. Politically, an even greater change had taken place, and in the colonies south of the St. Lawrence independent activities and competition in the fur trade were permitted. In New France strict centralization and government control still prevailed, with their attendant injustice and corruption.

Thus we have, in the far north, a private monopoly which for some ununderstandable reason neglected to reap the rewards of sole ownership. In the middle region, that of the St. Lawrence and the Great Lakes, we have great individual initiative and aggressiveness severely hampered by government restriction and oppression and by a backward manufacturing system in the home country, France.

To the south was a land in which men were already dreaming of still greater freedom and in which each colony controlled its own commerce in fur. Consequently, traders began pressing westward from New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia, using the rivers beyond the Allegheny Mountains. They reached the lower Ohio in La Salle's time and eventually became so great a menace to French supremacy in the middle ground that the seeds of the French and Indian War were sown. While the Hudson's Bay Company, far to the north, slept through French aggression, southern colonies brought about a situation which resulted, in 1760, in the conquest of Canada by the British.

The "Gentlemen Adventurers" rejoiced in that victory, for it meant that at last the French were ousted from Canada. The Company need only sit at ease on the Bay and wait. The French

no longer brought goods which had become necessary to the natives, and savage tribes were compelled to make the long journey from the plains and the wooded country.

But the conquest of Canada introduced a new factor into the fur trade, a factor which later picked up the machinery left by the French and operated it with such daring and aggressiveness for fifty years that the tottering Hudson's Bay Company was driven to beg a loan of £60,000 from the British treasury and finally, on what was practically a mandate from the government, was forced into combination with its equally exhausted rival.

When the French lost Canada, a thunderbolt was released from Montreal. Up on Hudson Bay, men employed at small salaries by an unprogressive and monopolistic company continued to get along as best they could without too much exertion. Down in Canada men of a wholly different type, men unafraid of great distances, eager for the adventure of penetrating a vast wilderness, were confronted with an opportunity to make quick fortunes. They leaped at the chance French defeat offered.

The Hudson's Bay Company was in no condition to meet this attack. After the first Scotch trader reached the Saskatchewan a serious cancer was uncovered within the organization itself. Almost since the beginning there had been smuggling and dishonesty on the part of ship captains and governors of the forts. Even a shareholder had been caught trading in the sacred territory. Many officials, both on land and on vessels, were dismissed. Captain Coats, one of the Company's most efficient mariners and with more than twenty-five years of service to his credit, was caught. He confessed and killed himself. That was two years before Hendry started his journey.

Hearne told how Moses Norton was notorious as a smuggler and enriched the sea captains. The year before Hearne started on his journey, the Company's seamen struck in London, demanding forty shillings a month wages, and the Company was compelled, that supplies might go forward to the Bay, to grant the demand. But the following year wholesale smuggling was discovered. Another sea captain was discharged, others warned. The Company raised salaries. Governors of forts were paid 130 pounds a year and a bonus of three shillings on every twenty beaver skins

sent home. Ship captains were given a bonus of sixpence per twenty beaver skins landed safely in London. In other words, the Hudson's Bay Company was helpless against its employees' thievery and sought to buy honesty.

Equally serious was the attitude of the fort governors at the time. When the French built their posts on the Saskatchewan, no reports of the fact were sent to London. It was not until fur receipts began to fall off alarmingly that the directors learned what was happening in the very center of Rupert's Land.

Thus, at the end of its first century, the Hudson's Bay Company faced the most disastrous struggle of its career with dishonest and timid servants, with ignorance at home of true conditions, and without the strength to resist the thunderbolts released from Montreal.

They were thunderbolts. They brought the fur trade adventure and romance, efficiency and courage, exploration and conquest, to a degree wholly unknown in the first century of the Company's existence. And we have so little that is admirable or alluring in those hundred years there is a distinct relief in turning at last to the story of men and circumstances upon which the ultimate glory and greatness of the Hudson's Bay were founded.

Much has been claimed for the Company in those first hundred years, but the record fails to produce much more than the claims. Neither in commerce, exploration nor extension of British influence did it accomplish anything of consequence. The facts remain that it had established only a few posts on the Bay and no more than four interior stations, none at any distance from salt water. It had permitted French traders to build up a chain of forts from Montreal to the plains of western Canada without taking any effective steps to halt this invasion of chartered territory.

But with the coming of the traders from Montreal, exploration and extension of trade progressed at an amazing rate. The first Canadians reached the Churchill River in 1774, fifteen years later the mouth of the Mackenzie and nineteen years later the Pacific Ocean. Their base was Montreal, on the St. Lawrence. The Hudson's Bay Company had been on the edge of this vast territory since 1670. The Canadians operated with a handicap of two thousand miles. Despite that handicap, in thirty years they discovered

more territory, and opened it to trade, than has the Hudson's Bay Company in all its history.

Kelsey and Hendry and Hearne made memorable journeys; and nothing came of them. The Montreal men built posts in the new lands they discovered. They made exploration pay, and in a few years they pushed the trade farther than the Hudson's Bay Company had in a century. They were on Peace River for fourteen years before the Hudson's Bay Company arrived, and even then the old Company was driven out. They discovered and developed the great Mackenzie basin, followed that mighty river to the sea, and except for a few years they held that rich territory against the Hudson's Bay. They reached the Pacific, were the first to cross the continent above Mexico, and they built posts beyond the Rocky Mountains. No Hudson's Bay Company post existed there before the union in 1821.

The energy, courage and efficiency of the Nor'Westers was truly astounding. They carried fur from the mouth of the Columbia in Oregon to Montreal, from the interior of British Columbia, from up in the present Yukon Territory. They built countless posts in adapting operations to changing conditions. They developed a system of transportation that was marvelously efficient when the vast distances and broken waterways are considered. And in so doing they devised means, developed a spirit and worked out a system of organization upon which the Hudson's Bay Company eventually rose to greatness.

Behind all this was one fundamental fact that has not been recognized in the story of that period. For the first time, individual initiative and accomplishment were accorded opportunity in the fur trade. Therein, more than in any other factor, lies the reason for the swift ascendancy of the Nor'Westers in the struggle with the slow, cumbersome, uninspired machine which was the Hudson's Bay Company. In the activities of the Montreal traders we find an early example of an attitude which was to become characteristic of the American continent. Loss did not mean defeat but only an incentive to try again. The wealth of a vast new land was to be had for the expenditure of courage and energy. Those men suffered severe losses, and it meant little. What they had done once, they could do again. It was that spirit, and that op-

portunity, which opposed the antiquated and feudal organization of the Hudson's Bay Company.

In the beginning of that westward movement from Montreal, each fur trader went into the wilderness as his own master. Success depended upon his own efforts. The rewards were his alone. He was untrammelled by orders from superiors or by custom. If he were unequal to the task, others crowded in behind him. When the first loose partnership was formed, the beginnings of the North West Company, that individualism was in no way hampered. Always there was provision for subordinates. Any young man who entered the Montreal fur trade as an employee, a clerk, could be certain of advancement and ultimate partnership if he displayed the proper qualities.

This machine of individual effort, loosely constructed in the beginning and in which reward went to the individual, flung itself into the trade against a staid, settled concern already steeped in a century of tradition and custom, and in which the active employees were on salary. Graft was prevalent. Initiative was frowned upon. Timid fort governors did not acquaint London with the facts.

We remember how Captain Gillam told Radisson that he did not care whether the Company got any trade, that he would receive his wages nevertheless. That spirit was still prevalent a hundred years later, and while there are examples of loyalty to the "Gentlemen Adventurers" on the part of their employees about the Bay, the fact remains that the incentive to risk and to conquer was lacking.

The story of Anthony Hendry was still fresh. Why, in 1770, should men risk the hazards and hardships of exploration for a hundred dollars reward? Why should they strive for a Company that paid low wages and provided pensions by withholding five per cent of those wages? Why attempt to learn about the fur empire and open the way to its commercial conquest when superiors would not believe the reports brought back?

The stupidity of the Hudson's Bay Company in this period is incomprehensible, unless we take into consideration the fact that, as a trading machine, it had become hidebound. A century of precedent and custom had robbed it of any vitality and initia-

tive it may have had. That combination of pride and faith in the past is peculiarly English. Today there are examples of it in the textile, coal and other industries, and in foreign trade. Antiquated machinery and methods and a refusal to meet the wishes of foreign customers undermine British prosperity. After the conquest of Canada the Hudson's Bay Company suffered for much the same reasons.

It was a case, too, of absentee and uninformed administration with slow communication being opposed by executives on the spot and thoroughly conversant with the situation. In the early days of the Hudson's Bay Company some strange orders issued from the committee in London, and these continued. Traders were constantly instructed to explain to the Indians that inter-tribal warfare was injurious to themselves. Samuel Hearne was given a valet. As late as 1784, nearly twenty years after the first Canadians reached the Saskatchewan, the Company shipped to Hudson Bay, for distribution among the savages, 150 copies of a tract on "The Country Clergyman's Advice to Parishioners."

"The Governor and Committee" provided by the charter a century earlier still administered the business of the Company. They sat in London, read reports, issued orders. In all the literature on the Company, the writer has not found a reference to a London official visiting Canada in that first century or more. In the Bay each fort had an independent governor who conducted the trade in his district and sent annual reports and information, sometimes, to London.

That is the machine which opposed the onslaughts of the Montreal traders. That is the Hudson's Bay Company which, historians would try to have us believe, has persisted from the time of Charles II to the present.

## CHAPTER XV

A geographical glimpse of Canada is necessary before taking up the story of those first English-speaking traders who went westward from Montreal after the fall of French power, who paved the way for the North West Company.

There were no steamships 170 years ago, no railroads, no roads leading westward from the St. Lawrence. All transportation and travel was by water, and the universal craft was the birchbark canoe.

In such a craft it was and is possible to start at any point in what is now Canada, with the exception of a slip of Labrador, and paddle to any other point, even though it be five thousand miles distant and across several major watersheds of the continent. It was not only possible. It was commonly done. Canoes carried furs from Astoria, at the mouth of the Columbia River in Oregon, to Montreal, on the St. Lawrence. Men paddled from Montreal to the Yukon in Alaska. If, as a summer vacationist, you have cruised some small river or chain of lakes in Maine, Ontario or Minnesota, glance at a map and try to imagine what that means.

Rivers of Canada flow into the Atlantic, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, Hudson Bay, Hudson Strait, the Gulf of Mexico, the Arctic Ocean, Bering Sea and the Pacific Ocean. It is said that a small brook in the Rocky Mountains strikes a rock and is divided, one branch ultimately reaching the Pacific, the other the Atlantic. In Minnesota and Ontario portages of a few hundred yards in low, swampy country lead from Arctic waters to those which flow into the Gulf of Mexico or the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The center of these radiating thoroughfares lies in Manitoba. A maze of waterways reaches in every direction. Sources of the Red and Mississippi Rivers are close together in Minnesota. Arctic waters start just back from the shores of Lake Superior



and flow to James Bay and Lake Winnipeg. The big Saskatchewan comes from the Rockies and reaches Hudson Bay by the Nelson. Interlocking streams and portages carry a canoe from the Saskatchewan to the Churchill, headwaters of which lie close to those of the Athabasca River. This stream, through Slave and Mackenzie Rivers, reaches the Arctic Ocean. Peace River sources mingle with those of the Fraser in the Rockies, the Liard's with those of the Stikine, the Yukon's with those of the lower Mackenzie. Tributaries of Great Slave Lake rise side by side with the sources of the Thelon and Back's River which empty, respectively, into the northern end of Hudson Bay and the Arctic Ocean.

These are the major connections. Except in the Rockies, practically all the rivers are easily navigated by canoe, and there are only three long portages in the entire system. Of minor waterways, there is an infinite number, especially in Ontario, Manitoba, northern Saskatchewan and the northwest territories. The vast expanse between Hudson Bay and the Great Lakes and Lake Winnipeg is so sprinkled with lakes and streams that even today a great number of them are unnamed and unmapped.

The far reaching maze of Canadian water communication was not discovered all at once. Centuries elapsed between the first bits of exploration on the Atlantic coast and the final crossing of the continent. It was not until 1634 that the French reached the western side of Lake Michigan, and twenty-five years later the west end of Lake Superior and those streams beyond that mingle with the headwaters of the Mississippi and Red Rivers. Radisson found the overland way to the great plains, yet it was nearly a century before the French and Hendry crossed those plains. Not until the coming of the traders from Montreal was exploration swiftly extended.

It will be remembered that Radisson, in seeking a route to Hudson Bay, discovered the great advantage of reaching the heart of fur land from that inland sea. A glance at the map is sufficient to show the great distance between Montreal and the north end of Lake Winnipeg, and the comparatively short distance between York Factory, at the mouth of Hayes River, and Lake Winnipeg.

From The Pas, just west of Lake Winnipeg, on the Saskatche-

wan, fur routes eventually led to Oregon, British Columbia, the Western plains, the Arctic coast, Alaska and all the vast territory between. The Pas was about 2,500 miles from Montreal, about 600 from York Factory. That is the handicap under which the Canadians labored throughout the fifty years of competition. They had to carry goods nearly 2,000 miles before they were on a par with their rivals. In the long commercial warfare that is to follow, this should be remembered.

The infinite canoeways of Canada did not afford transportation alone. Large rivers mean innumerable small streams and lakes, and in that day in America small streams and lakes meant beaver. The continent was aswarm with them. The then easily accessible part of the beaver territory lay within the boundaries of Rupert's Land, to which the Hudson's Bay Company laid claim by right of charter but in which it had never established a post. The French had reached the heart of it. Now the Canadians, with only a shrug for the charter, took the place of the French.

The North West Company was not formed at once to take advantage of French defeat. Individualism did not immediately leap to success when opportunity was afforded. In fact, individualism nearly wrecked itself, and the North West Company did not come actively into being until nineteen years after the fall of Montreal. The story of those nineteen years is one of courage and energy, and of sordidness and violence. Nor'Westers themselves, in writing of the period, do not attempt extenuation. Conditions were bad. The fur trade, the Indians and fur bearing animals were headed toward oblivion. And largely on those first years of violence and debauchery and trickery have been founded many charges against the North West Company that are still repeated.

British historians refuse to admit that civilization has no savage. The advance of the white race the world over has been tattered and frayed. Frontiers have always produced recklessness, trickery, oppression and debauchery. A wilderness has always removed restraints. We need not go past the last week-end to find instances of apparently respectable and law-abiding men and women littering a countryside with luncheon rubbish and robbing gardens and farms of flowers and shrubs. Separate them from the nearest policeman by two thousand miles instead of twenty,

give them an opportunity to acquire sudden wealth, and watch the result.

This is not a defense of the swarm of traders who flocked westward up the St. Lawrence after the Conspiracy of Pontiac had failed. It is an attempt to see things in proportion and to understand the inevitable results of a sudden removal of all restraint upon the average human being. In the present case conditions were aggravated by the fact that the theoretical monopoly of the English in the north and the special restrictions of the French were absent. The American colonial system of freedom of trade permitted any one, rascal or good citizen, to attain sudden wealth.

The British mind abhors such things, and the Britisher boasts of the lack of lawlessness on the fringes of his expansion, but in the two decades following the fall of Montreal the British government in America failed to prevent a fur land stampede that embraced all the characteristics of later gold rushes and Indian troubles in the United States which British writers so love to denounce.

Not that the British government was to blame. Sir Robert Johnson tried his best. The trouble was that men, as they still do, construed sudden liberty to be license. And the situation was ended, not by government interference, but by another product of the American continent, big business. For the North West Company gives us our first glimpse of it on the continent. It affords the first instances of strong men dominating a situation. It presents us with the first true monopoly, and one founded on might and ability, not on royal favor or governmental decree.

The British government in America was confronted by an entirely new situation in 1760, a situation presented many times since on this continent, and one with which it could not cope. Not only was trade free, not only was quick wealth in sight, not only was fur land beyond any judge, jail or army post, but French defeat had abandoned in the wilderness a swarm of men who knew no other life, who suddenly found themselves cut off from country and countrymen and forced to adopt the primitive life of their Indian customers.

These Frenchmen obtained small trade outfits in Michilimackinac, then western headquarters, from Canadian merchants.

They scattered through the wilderness, down into the Ohio and Mississippi valleys as well as above the present boundary, and as they carried much rum, the effect on the Indians was demoralizing. Not many were traders of experience. Many had been only canoemen in the French trade before 1760. Others flocked in from the American colonies south of the St. Lawrence. Few felt any responsibility to those who had provided the goods on credit. Quantities of trade articles were wasted to gain Indian favor.

In 1768 Montreal merchants complained that traders from New York were using nothing except rum and that freedom of trade had let in many persons of disreputable character and little property. Traders from the American colonies worked north from the Ohio into territory that had always been French. Others came up the St. Lawrence. It was a gold rush, and a gold rush always brings a scum.

Only the braver and more energetic pressed northeastward from the Great Lakes. A number of the weaker and troublesome element reached Grand Portage on Lake Superior, gateway to the interior. Some of those who went beyond may have been rascals, but they were brave rascals. Men of enterprise and vision reached Rainy Lake, northwest of the present Duluth, before the Pontiac uprising in 1763. Driven out by that Indian warfare, they returned in 1765 to be robbed by the Rainy Lake Indians. A trader, whose name has not survived, repeated the attempt in 1766, with the same result.

They were brave men to accept such risks, and they would not be beaten. A larger party got past Rainy Lake in 1767 by establishing a post on the Lake. They reached Lake Winnipeg, hub of the radiating waterways, went even farther. A Hudson's Bay Company trader, Mathew Cocking, wrote that James Finlay of Montreal was on the Saskatchewan in 1767. Alexander Mackenzie has given Thomas Curry credit for being the first Canadian to reach that point. It is probable that Currie and Finlay were together. Mackenzie says that Currie cleared \$50,000 on his venture and retired to the east.

That was gold at the grass roots. Traders flocked westward. Montreal merchants would furnish the goods on credit. French canoemen were available for the work, and Frenchmen knew the

way. And many of those Frenchmen obtained goods for trade. Alexander Mackenzie wrote that the French with small outfits proved a disgrace to their race and used liquor freely in debauching the Indians, and he did not think better of the early British who "carried the trade beyond French limits (of discovery), though with no benefit to themselves or their neighbors, the Hudson's Bay Company."

Year by year the number of traders grew in the vast northwest. Mackenzie explains how each man was on his own, without supervision or master, and how wealth awaited him if he found an isolated spot where he was not bothered by competition. But once a competitor arrived, each schemed to outwit the other, to belittle him before the natives, and to get the fur by any means. Liquor played a greater part each year.

The results of this situation were inevitable. These individual traders received their outfits from merchants two thousand or more miles away. If they wasted trade goods in gaining native favor, they let the merchant stand the loss. A custom arose of giving to the last creditor the returns of a successful expedition. In other words, if a man borrowed four trade outfits in as many years, and lost everything except the fourth year, the last merchant to advance credit was paid out of the returns. The others got what was left. Montreal merchants, Scotchmen, did not long put up with such a custom.

The second result of this freedom and individualism run riot was the effect on the Indians themselves. The natives would sell anything for liquor, and they saw white men fighting among themselves, cheating and even worse. And in all too many instances a drunken Indian was robbed or defrauded of his fur. An inevitable hostility toward the traders was developed and the situation grew acute. Mackenzie, in his history of the period, tells the climax.

A party of traders on the Saskatchewan in the spring of 1780 staged a drinking party in which many Indians participated. One trader, irritated by the persistent begging of a drunken native, gave the man laudanum in rum, intending to put him to sleep. But the man died and the Indians, aroused, attacked the whites. One trader and several white employees were killed, while the others fled after abandoning half their fur and goods.

About the same time, Mackenzie relates, two establishments on the Assiniboine River were attacked and several white men and many Indians were killed. "Without entering into any further reasoning on the subject, it appears to be incontrovertible that the irregularity pursued in carrying on the fur trade had brought it into its present forlorn situation; and nothing but the greatest calamity that could have befallen the natives, saved the traders from destruction."

Just how general this uprising of the Indians might have become is not stated, but the smallpox epidemic, to which Mackenzie refers, put an effectual stop to anything the Indians had in mind. The disease, said to have been brought from the Missouri River by a war party, spread with appalling swiftness. Natives scattered in every direction in an effort to avoid it, and this carried the contagion. Whole bands were wiped out. It was estimated that between one-third and one-half of the Indian population was exterminated. Mackenzie paints a touching picture, in the manner of his day, of the scourge.

Results were twofold. A possible Indian war was prevented. Traders were ruined and driven from the country. The disease persisted for two or three years. In 1781 a small party went to the Churchill River and obtained only seven packs of fur.

The effect on the whole trade of the northwest was that the disreputable element was largely eliminated. Montreal merchants had stood heavy losses. The better element among the traders, and by no means all the men who went west of Lake Superior were irresponsible scoundrels, now took hold. The foundation for the North West Company had already been laid. After the smallpox epidemic the organization took form swiftly. For the first time in the history of America, big business found its opportunity in the life of the new world and quickly grasped it.

## CHAPTER XVI

A feature of the struggle between the Hudson's Bay Company and the Nor'Westers which has almost escaped notice, despite the vast amount of writing on the subject, is that, after losing the French as adversaries, the "Gentlemen Adventurers" were confronted by the antagonism of another race.

Isaac Cowie, who went from Scotland to Hudson Bay as a boy apprentice of the Company before the monopoly was relinquished in 1870, pointed this out in "The Company of Adventurers," published in 1914.<sup>1</sup>

"Many of the North West officers were Highland Jacobites themselves or sons of those who had fought at Culloden, or were related by blood to those who had been defeated and butchered after the fight by the orders of 'the Duke of Cumberland,'" he wrote. "So when Hearne, in 1774, gave to the new Hudson's Bay house at this strategic point on the route of the Nor'Westers the detested name of 'Cumberland,' the English Company appeared to intend to add insult as well as injury to the clansmen."

The battle of Culloden was fought in 1745, only twenty-two years before Thomas Curry and James Finlay reached the country beyond Lake Winnipeg and began to buy fur in the back yard of the Hudson's Bay Company. Both were Scotchmen.

J. N. Wallace, in "The Wintering Partners on Peace River," a carefully done and enlightening account of the first trading posts in that interesting region, published in 1929, also takes note of the racial feature of the struggle.

"The leaders ranged on either side of this competition were not only rivals in trade," he writes, "but were men in whom the ancient antagonism between the English and the Highlanders of Scotland was by no means wholly extinguished . . . The contest,

<sup>1</sup> From *The Company of Adventurers*, by Isaac Cowie, The Ryerson Press (William Briggs).

indeed, was not unlike, in miniature, what occurred when the Highlands were invaded by English troops—a contest of chiefs of clans against the more orderly, if more cumbersome, forces of a greater and more centralized power.”<sup>1</sup>

After the Jacobite defeat in 1745, many young Highlanders fled from their home country and some settled in Montreal, then French. Later their ranks were increased by loyalists who left the United States. Washington Irving wrote that most of the North West Company clerks were young men of good families from the Highlands, “characterized by the perseverance, thrift, and fidelity of their country.”

For the first time in the history of the fur trade, it drew men who had an education and a background. Hearne alone in the Hudson's Bay Company has left a literary record, so far as is known, of events preceding the union in 1821. The Nor'Westers wrote constantly and a great storehouse has come down to us from their day. Further, they had vision, initiative and ambition. They were impatient to explore, to achieve. While the Hudson's Bay people were content to sit about the bay and take what the Indians brought, these men from Montreal displayed a lively curiosity as to the extent of the continent, and their desires brought action.

Their personalities live today in what they wrote in lonely trading posts and on journeys of discovery. They left a literature that is inspiring, often charming, intimately revealing, and always remarkably free from bias and prejudice. There is little or no boasting in it, but between the lines a story of fortitude and enterprise crops out constantly. Even the journals of daily events disclose constant drama, intimate little sketches of hazard and resourcefulness and bald courage. Combined, this literature presents an amazing picture of the gallant conquest of so large a part of the continent, of the qualities essential in such a movement.

Men of this type began to dominate the situation when the greed and trickery of petty traders had brought the British into open conflict with the Indians and when smallpox had put a stop to the traffic. From that time on they controlled Montreal activi-

<sup>1</sup> From *The Wintering Partners on Peace River*, by J. N. Wallace, Thorburn & Abbott.



ties in the northwest. They, and men of the same stamp, carried on the extension of trade until the union with the Hudson's Bay Company.

Not all those who rushed into the Great Lakes district and beyond, after the fall of French power, were petty or disreputable. Force, character and courage were required to lead such a movement and men possessing these qualities were on hand, men who helped form the beginnings of the North West Company and saw it rise to power. One of these pioneers was Alexander Henry and a brief sketch of his activities illustrates as can nothing else the quality of that vigorous movement. In fifteen years this young man displayed more initiative and accomplished more than any Hudson's Bay employee; one might almost say, than had the Hudson's Bay Company itself.

In contrast with the story of the first century of the chartered company, that of Henry stands out significantly. He was young, adventurous, abundantly courageous and energetic. He was a good business man. He must have had a fair education, for he wrote one of the first of those excellent and absorbing accounts of the fur trade which have come down to us from the Nor'-Westers. Parkman, who used Henry's published work in his "Conspiracy of Pontiac," said, "The authenticity of this very interesting book has never been questioned."

This pioneer fur trader, who lived to be eighty-five, was known as an honorable, just and kindly man. He made friends wherever he went. The Indians called him "The Handsome Englishman." After his return from the northwest in 1776 he went to England and France. It is interesting, and most indicative of the man, to note that, though he had been absent from civilization for fifteen years, he possessed much refinement and was well received in Europe, especially in France. Among those captivated by his personality and accounts of adventures was Marie Antoinette. Government officials also knew and respected him and depended upon him for accurate information concerning the Indian country. He abandoned his interest in the fur trade in 1796 and became a successful merchant in Montreal.

As was true of many old Nor'Westers, fur was in the Henry blood. The head of the family is always spoken of as Alexander

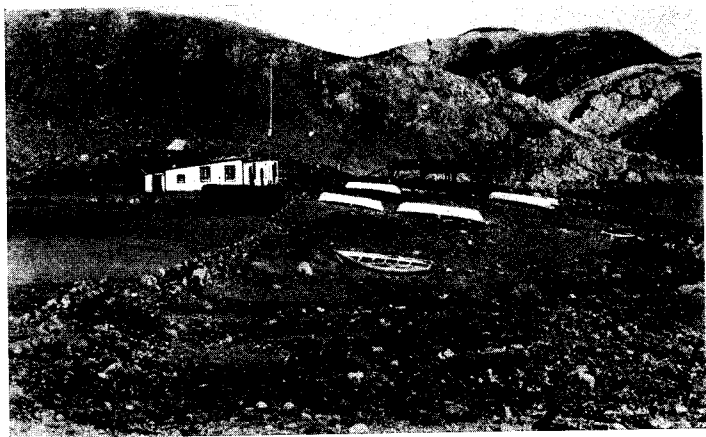
Henry the Elder because a nephew of the same name became a prominent Nor'Wester and also left a remarkable book. William Henry, son of the elder Henry, was a Nor'Wester who led an adventurous fur trading life. Alexander Henry, Jr., the second son, was killed, with four other men and a number of women and children, by Indians at Fort Nelson, a North West Company fort on the Liard River. An adopted nephew, Robert Henry, was active in the struggle with the Hudson's Bay.

The founder of this fur land dynasty was born in New Jersey. He was twenty years old when Quebec fell in 1759 and was attached to a British expeditionary force as a trader when the final campaign began in 1760. Immediately upon the fall of Montreal he applied for permission to go to the upper Great Lakes to trade with the Indians.

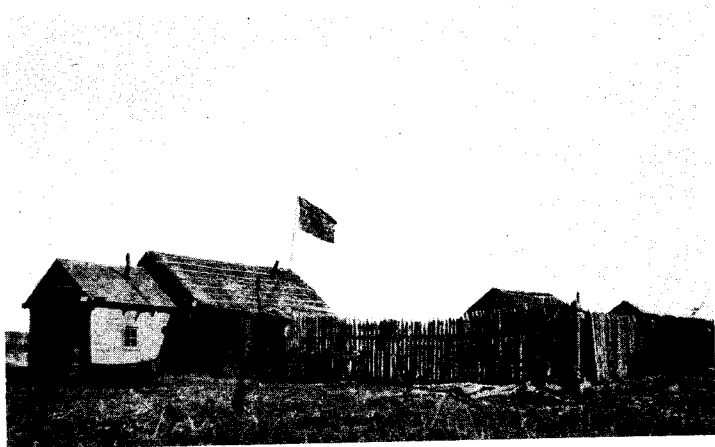
Henry knew no more of trading for furs than did any green apprentice sent out from England by the Hudson's Bay Company. He had never walked on snowshoes, could not speak an Indian language. He did not even know the methods of trade. But he saw the opportunity in that vast land directly behind the Hudson's Bay posts on the inland sea and before he returned to civilization fifteen years later he had prospected the copper deposits on Lake Superior and interested European capital therein, he had traded all about the shores of that great lake, he had made a winter journey far out into the western plains with the object of reaching the Rocky Mountains, he had gained a clear idea of the vast Mackenzie River basin before white men ever saw it, and he had gone north to the Churchill River and intercepted a large band of Indians bound for Fort Churchill with their fur. He was a partner in the first crude beginning of what eventually became the North West Company.

Young Henry did not get far in 1760. He lost his canoes and goods in a rapids and had to start over again the next year, when he reached Michilimackinac, in the strait between Lakes Michigan and Huron, about 600 miles from Montreal. Because the Indians on the lakes were such staunch friends of the French, it was necessary for Henry to disguise himself as a French woodsman to escape being killed.

He made this journey by way of the Ottawa and Mattawan



Hudson's Bay Post on Hudson's Straits.



Fort Wrigley, Mackenzie River.



Rivers, Lake Nipissing, French River and the north shore of Lake Huron. Radisson used this route, as did the French traders after him, and it became the main highway of the Nor'Westers. After 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company used it for quick communication between Winnipeg and Montreal until American railroads reached Minnesota a century after Henry's journey.

When Henry reached Michilimackinac in 1761 the many Indians in that district were hostile. Two other traders followed him from Montreal and the Ottawas planned to kill all three. The Indians' allegiance to the French was strong, an attitude maintained by former French traders who remained in the wilderness. Arrival of British troops saved Henry and the others but two years later the conspiracy of Pontiac rendered the Great Lakes region unsafe for the English. Henry survived the terrible Michilimackinac massacre, the story of his escape ranking with Radisson's experiences among the Iroquois, and he probably would have been among the first to press on into the great northwest had he not been diverted by the copper deposits on Lake Superior. He did trade for several years on the lake and it was not until 1775 that he went westward.

We have already told how the first British traders to reach Rainy Lake were robbed by the Indians in 1765 and 1766, and how Curry and Finlay went on to the Saskatchewan in 1767. Others had followed, and now the way was clear for Alexander Henry and a French Canadian, J. B. Cadotte. They reached Lake Winnipeg without difficulty and there Henry met Peter Pond, a Connecticut Yankee whose life has come down to us in more or less disrepute but who remains one of the most remarkable of the early traders.

A little later Henry and Pond were overtaken by Joseph and Thomas Frobisher, two of the most energetic and successful of future Nor'Westers, and a Mr. Patterson. Thus, in one party in 1775, gathered by chance at the north end of Lake Winnipeg, we have four pioneers in the North West Company movement, all men destined to play a large part in exploration and extension of trade.

The Frobisher brothers are particularly interesting. They were Yorkshiremen, two of the very few concerned in the North West

Company inception and development not from the Highlands of Scotland. This whole new movement was distinctly Scotch but Joseph Frobisher was not only the most energetic and far-seeing of the first traders on the Saskatchewan and beyond but he long remained as a guiding force in the Nor'Westers' career.

Joseph was not a stranger to this distant land. He had built a fort on Red River, in Manitoba, and was probably the first Britisher to do so. He is credited on one of Peter Pond's maps with having been as far as the Churchill River in 1771. He also had built a post near the French Basquia in 1772 and in 1774, at his Fort La Traite on the Churchill, he had dealt a blow to the Hudson's Bay trade which has often been recounted.

No man of the period displayed more energy and courage than did Joseph Frobisher. His expedition to Churchill River was the first by a white man. He was nearly three thousand miles from Montreal. The Hudson's Bay Company had been at the mouth of the river for nearly a century and now, in Frobisher's activities, suffered one of the major losses in its career.

It was back to the Churchill River country that Joseph Frobisher and his brother were going when Henry encountered them, and to that chance meeting and its results has been ascribed the inception of the North West Company. Henry and the Frobishers combined their interests that winter, formed a partnership for the season, while to the southwest, on the Saskatchewan, Cadotte and three other traders did the same. That method of organization, with refinements, persisted for forty-six years.

The gallant pioneers in this new thrust to the center of an unknown land, men of a different stamp than the small fry who scattered through the Great Lakes region, wished to insure their profits. They recognized the folly of cutting one another's throats, and they pooled their goods that winter and agreed to pool the profits. Some such organization was necessary. Later, in succeeding steps, we will see how consolidation was perfected until the Montreal organization became, in effect, a monopoly far more effective than anything the Hudson's Bay Company had achieved.

The beginnings of that movement are significant. The strong had gone past the weak and the disreputable. They had dared a more distant wilderness, had taken far greater risks. A century

after Radisson's time, white men with vision and enterprise had again entered the fur trade. The blighting influence of French governmental corruption was gone. Bunker Hill was just around the corner and British life in America was rousing to the sense of freedom. The vast unknown in the center of the continent was calling. Wealth awaited the confident and the dauntless.

The Scotch Highlander was peculiarly fitted for the opportunity now presented. He had all the qualities necessary for accomplishment. He could endure physical hardship. Generations of struggle among the clans and with the English had given him resourcefulness, a fierce courage and ability to command. Thriftiness and careful business management were inherent. His intelligence was of a high order.

Yet all the Highlander's endowments were necessary to cope with the situation. The distance from Montreal to the Churchill River was an appalling obstacle in itself. Savage nations were treacherous, proudly insolent or openly hostile. Food must be found from day to day. Swift, unknown rivers threatened always with loss of imperative equipment. Long, severe winters were implacable foes. Hazard rode the bow of every canoe that entered the great unknown.

Henry and the Frobishers met and conquered all these hazards, and again modern man finds difficulty in understanding just what such accomplishments meant, just what the conditions were. Present day means of transportation, equipment and food have eliminated so many dangers and difficulties it is not easy to go back to an era of flintlocks and raw man power. That man power, stark, unaided muscular force, is one of the marvels of the Nor'-Westers' enterprise. It moved countless tons from Montreal to every corner of the north, and now in the bodies of forty French Canadian voyageurs it propelled the goods of these pioneers to waters never before seen by members of the white race.

Alexander Henry's outfit was in four canoes, the Frobishers' in six, and four men did the work of paddling and portaging each craft. The canoes, and they were undoubtedly the same as those which became standard beyond Lake Superior, were made of cedar strips and birchbark. Each was about thirty feet long and

carried a ton and a half of goods in addition to food and baggage for the men.

As the big fleet went beyond Lake Winnipeg, up the Saskatchewan, it reached Basquia, where Anthony Hendry had first encountered French traders twenty-one years earlier. The French were gone, but in their place was a new and alarming obstacle. On the site of the French post was the encampment of a large band of Indians under Chief Chatique. This savage brigand, after separating the leaders from their voyageurs by a friendly invitation to a conference in his tent, calmly informed the traders that he expected a present for the simple reason that he and his people had nothing while the traders had an abundance. Failure to be generous would result in death for all. His demands consisted of three casks of gunpowder, four bags of shot and ball, two bales of tobacco, three kegs of rum, three guns, knives, flints and some smaller articles.

"He went on to say," Henry wrote, "that with the number of men which he had, he could take the whole of our property, without our consent; and that therefore his demands ought to be regarded as very reasonable: that he was a peaceable man, and one that contented himself with moderate views, in order to avoid quarrels."

The traders were helpless, and complied. They gave out the "presents" and hastened on upriver, and had gone only two miles when Chatique, alone in a canoe, overtook them. He boarded a trader's craft, spear in hand, and demanded a keg of rum. Again the traders were obliged to comply.

A few days later "we reached Cumberland House, one of the factories of the Hudson's Bay Company, seated on Sturgeon lake. This house had been built the year before by Mr. Hearne. We found it garrisoned by Highlanders, from the Orkney Islands, and under the command of a Mr. Cockings, by whom, though unwelcomed guests, we were treated with much civility. The design, in building this house, was to prevent the Indians from dealing with the Canadian merchants and to induce them to go to Hudson Bay."

The Montreal men, quite naturally, went on past Cumberland House and rendered it largely ineffective by building their posts



nearer the Indians. J. B. Cadotte went to the forks of the Saskatchewan, where the French had maintained a fort years before. Peter Pond, for an unexplained reason, retraced his course to Lake Winnipeg, braving a second meeting with Chatique, while Henry and the Frobishers turned north toward the Churchill, where they could again intercept the Indians on their way down that river to Hudson Bay in the spring.

The end of October had come, which means winter was close at hand in that latitude. They had traveled a long way, by stream and lake, but the most difficult part of their journey lay ahead. The canoes were heavily loaded with trading goods and had scant space for food. Fish were particularly abundant near Cumberland House. It was a spot of comparative safety in that vast wilderness, and between it and the Churchill was the Maligne River. This, according to Ross Cox, another North West Company author of distinction, "for its length, is the most dangerous, cross-grained piece of navigation in the Indian country."

The Frobishers were well aware of this fact but neither they nor Alexander Henry wished to risk success for the comparative ease and safety of the Saskatchewan. They drove on, into the face of winter, with little food, ready for the toil and danger of the Maligne.

Winter won. They reached Beaver Lake on November first, and the next morning the lake was frozen over. "Our first object was to procure food," Henry recorded. "We had only three days' stock remaining, and we were forty-three persons in number."

Food for three days! Winter swooping down and no shelter! Montreal three thousand difficult and dangerous miles behind them! Such a situation becomes commonplace in the annals of the Nor'Westers. It is repeated so often its significance loses force. But it was an ever-present threat for those pioneers in the fur trade.

Henry and the Frobishers began to fish and erect log cabins. They caught fish, but had nothing else all winter, except occasional changes to moose meat. No flour! No vegetables! No sugar! Fish, caught daily by bitter effort through holes in the ice, stood between them and starvation.

The Frobishers were content to rest there during the winter

but Alexander Henry was not. On January first he started down to Cumberland House, where he visited Cocking of the Hudson's Bay, and then went on westward along the Saskatchewan to see his old friend, Cadotte, at The Forks. He had something more than a social call in mind in making this difficult journey in severe winter weather, however. His intention was to cross to the Rocky Mountains and he attempted to do so, turned back out on the great plains only because Indians convinced him it was not a journey to be made in that season. He did find remote tribes which he induced to come in to the new posts to trade.

In the spring Alexander Henry and Joseph Frobisher went on north to the Churchill itself, Thomas Frobisher having gone ahead to build a post. They left their winter quarters "with no greater stock of provisions than a single supper" and caught fish and shot moose as they traveled. But when they reached the Churchill the Indians from Lake Athabasca did not arrive on their journey to Hudson Bay, as was expected. So the Montreal men started up the river with the intention of going on to Lake Athabasca, which had never been seen by white men.

Eight days up the Churchill they met the Chipewyan Indians, described as a friendly people, and returned with them to the post Thomas Frobisher had built. Henry does not speak of efforts made to persuade the Indians not to go on to Hudson Bay. He does refer to the use of liquor.

"They (the chiefs) inquired, whether or not we had any rum; and, being answered in the affirmative, they observed, that several of their young men had never tasted the liquor, and that if it were too strong it would affect their heads. Our rum was in consequence submitted to their judgement; and after tasting it several times, they pronounced it to be too strong and requested that we would *order a part of the spirit to evaporate*. We complied, by adding more water, to what had received a large proportion of that element before; and, this being done, the chiefs signified their approbation.

"The chiefs observed to us, that their young men, while sober, would not be guilty of any irregularity; but that lest, when in liquor, they should be troublesome, they had ordered a certain number not to drink at all, but maintain a constant guard. We

found their orders punctually obeyed; and not a man attempted to enter our house all that night."

Alexander Henry and the Frobishers were well repaid for the risks and toil of their long journey, and for their foresight. "On the third morning, this little fair was closed; and, on making up our packs, we found, that we had purchased twelve thousand beaver skins, besides large numbers of otter and marten."

But fur alone did not hold the interest of Alexander Henry. On this his first expedition into the far northwest he had attempted to cross the plains to the Rocky Mountains. When he and the Frobishers penetrated farther than white men had ever gone toward the sources of the Mackenzie River he exhibited a curiosity in what lay beyond that was to become characteristic of so many Nor'Westers and which was wholly absent in early Hudson's Bay annals.

Henry gained from his Indian customers on the Churchill a very good idea of the country to the northwest. He learned of the Peace River, "which descended from the Stony or Rocky Mountains, and from which mountains the distance to the *salt lake*, meaning the Pacific Ocean, was not great; that the lake (Athabasca) emptied itself by a river, which ran to the northward, which they called Kiratchinini Sibi, or Slave River, and which flows into another lake, called by the same name; but, whether this lake was or was not the sea, or whether it emptied itself or not into the sea, they were unable to say."

Joseph Frobisher and Henry departed at once for Lake Superior and Montreal, leaving goods with Thomas Frobisher, who was to go on to Lake Athabasca. He did not reach it, but stopped at Ile à la Crosse Lake, where the Henry-Frobisher party had met the Chipewyan Indians, and where Thomas Frobisher established a post farther toward the northwest than white men had ever gone.

Neither Alexander Henry nor Joseph Frobisher returned to the country beyond Lake Superior. Their experiment in pooling interests and avoiding competition had pointed the way to success in the fur trade. Their discovery of the rich fur land of the Athabasca region had demonstrated the enormous possibilities of the traffic. Their interest in geography had led to a knowledge that

more rich territory lay beyond. Their experience with the gentle Mr. Cocking at Cumberland House had given them scant respect for any resistance the Hudson's Bay Company might afford.

They had discovered an Eldorado and the means of working it. Undoubtedly, as they were paddled the endless hundreds of miles to Grand Portage that summer, Joseph Frobisher and Alexander Henry sat side by side in a birch canoe, their backs against heavy bales of fine furs, and worked out roughly the details of how this new found trade could be advantageously conducted. They dreamed a dream that became the North West Company.

## CHAPTER XVII

Undoubtedly there were other examples of temporarily pooled interests after the winter of 1775-1776 when the Frobishers, Alexander Henry and others tried the experiment on the Churchill and Saskatchewan Rivers. Little definite information has come from that period but Alexander Mackenzie recorded an instance. In 1778 several traders near Cumberland House joined stock and sent Peter Pond with trade goods to the Athabasca country, thereby opening a district in which the Hudson's Bay Company made no attempt to establish itself until 1802.

Pond, who after leaving Alexander Henry in 1775 went to the west side of Lake Winnipeg and remained there two years, was now the first trader of any race to reach the Athabasca River and Athabasca Lake. He accomplished something more than that. He had already penetrated the sacred chartered land of the Hudson's Bay Company. Now he was the first to cross it and to establish a post in the huge basin of the Mackenzie River beyond, to connect Montreal with the distant waterways of the remote northwest. Samuel Hearne had entered the basin on his return from Coppermine River, but, like all early Hudson's Bay exploration, his journey had no bearing on the fur trade.

But when Peter Pond reached Athabasca River in the fall of 1778 he built a post on the east bank about thirty miles south of where the stream flows into Athabasca Lake, and for seven years, Alexander Mackenzie wrote, no other establishment was made in that country. Formerly the Indians of the district had undertaken the long journey to Fort Churchill. The Frobishers and Henry had intercepted them, and Cumberland House, after 1774, was much nearer. But now, according to Mackenzie's account of those days, large bands of Crees and Chipewyans were glad to find Pond so near their own country. They would not have to make the long journey and were "immediately recon-

ciled" to the increased price for goods which Pond necessarily asked.

Mackenzie says Pond bought so much fur his canoes could carry only half of it. He left the rest in the log house he had built and returned from Lake Superior to find them "in the same state as he had left them."

Pond remained in this district for six years. Maps he left and statements of other traders are conflicting as to dates and location of his establishments but it is stated that he went up Peace River a short distance. One of his own maps shows that he wintered on the south side of Great Slave Lake. Mackenzie wrote that when smallpox swept the Indian country Pond sent a clerk into the northwest to stop any natives on their way down to trade so that they would not get the disease. But the contagion reached them nevertheless and they carried it home to their own and neighboring tribes.

Peter Pond has never been given due credit for his pioneering work in the Athabasca country. British writers refer to him as "viciously-disposed and self-confident," "an able but desperate character," and they do not hesitate to call him a murderer, although the evidence is not clear. Because he was born in Connecticut he is always referred to as "an American." Even fellow Nor'-Westers were not kind in written comments and he is represented as being morose and always suspecting offense where it was not intended. Alexander Mackenzie, in commenting on the murder trial of Pond and a clerk, said they were acquitted but "nevertheless, their innocence was not so apparent as to extinguish the original suspicion."

Yet modern writers have known very little about Pond and, morose and even murderer though he may have been, he is in reality one of the most colorful and enterprising men engaged in the early North West movement. A part of his autobiography, discovered since existing histories of the Hudson's Bay Company were written, reveals a different person and explains much that has been said about him. And because Pond was one of those first traders who pushed westward and participated in the wild disorders that marked the period, and because later he was to play a part of vast importance to the United States, interesting

glimpses of the period may be had through following his career.

Like Radisson, Peter Pond is saved from complete ignominy by chance alone. As Radisson's manuscript was rescued from London tradesmen who were using it for waste paper, Pond's did not escape a similar fate. Enough of it was lost to rob the story of his time of much valuable material. For Peter Pond could write.

The original manuscript of his autobiography was found in 1868 by Mrs. Nathan Pond in the kitchen of Charles Hobby Pond, nephew of Peter Pond and governor of Connecticut in 1853. The manuscript was being used as waste paper and it was printed in the *Connecticut Magazine* "as a curious example of orthography."

An astoundingly curious example it is, and yet one investigator has praised it as a work of high literary merit. Reuben Gold Thwaites said Pond's description of the Battle of Ticonderoga in 1758 "is sufficient, by its accuracy and vigor, to prove the value of his journal as an historical source."

Peter Pond was born in Milford, Connecticut, on January 18, 1740. He was sixteen years old at the time of Braddock's defeat and wanted to enlist against the French, but his father refused permission.

"It is well known that from the fifth Gineration downward we ware all waryers Ither by Sea or Land," Pond wrote, "and in Dead so strong was the Propensatey for the arme that I could not with stand its Temptations." So he went down to the tavern one night and enlisted, serving through the following winter at Lake George. In 1758 he enlisted again and has left a vivid and stirring picture of the battle of Ticonderoga.

The New York Historical Society collections record that Peter Pond, aged 19, born in Connecticut, a shoemaker by trade, enlisted in 1759, as Pond tells in his journal. He received a slight wound in the siege of Niagara. In 1760 he was given a commission and enlisted for the fourth time, but the war was soon over. He failed to find anything exciting to do on land and turned to the sea, making a voyage to the West Indies. On his return he found his father had gone trading near Detroit, and the young man remained in Milford taking care of the family for three

years, "which was the Ondley three years of my Life I was three years in one Plase sins I was sixteen years old up to Sixty."

About 1764 young Pond himself went trading, first at Detroit. For six years he remained in that district and evidently he became embroiled in one of the affairs the petty traders commonly staged. According to his journal, Pond was made the victim of bullying tactics. "But the Abuse was too Grate. We met the Next Morning Eairley & Discharged Pistels in which the Pore fellowe was unfortenat. I then Came Down the Countrey & Declared the fact But thare was none to Prosacute me."

Pond then went on a "ture to ye West Indees," and after his return entered a partnership with a man named Graham of New York. He took an outfit valued at £4,600 to Michilimackinac and thence to the Mississippi River, and on to the plains country toward the Missouri. There he met the Yankton Sioux and seems to have been the first trader to visit them. After feasting and smoking in "Sarremony," "at four o'clock I commenced a trade with them but ye Crowd was so Grate that the Chefe was obliged to Dubel his Gard and I went on with my trade in safety."

The chief had given Pond to understand that the trade would begin at sundown. "But he was absent When they Compeld me to Begin Befoar the time. he Likewise told me that If I was to contend with them thay Mite take all that I had. I was in a Bad Sittuation But at Sundown the Chefe arived and seeing the Crowd Grate he put to the Gard Six Men more and took the Charge on himself. He was as well Obade & Kept up as Smart Disapline as I ever Saw."

One Indian caused trouble but the Chief "Ordered one of the Gard to throw his Lans threw him in Case he persisted in his Imperdens. I continued my trade till Near Morning. By that time thare furs ware Gon. Thay preparad to March of as thay had Lane on the Spot Sum time befour my arival they had Got out of Provishon. I was not in a situation to Asist them Beaing Destatute Myself. By Day Lite I Could not sea One but the Chefe who cept close By me to the last to Prevent aney Insult which Mite arise as thay ware Going Of. The reson of the Behavior of these People is thay Never Saw a Trader Befoar on Thare Own Ground or at least Saw a Bale of Goods Opend. . . . These People are



in thare Sentaments Verrey Averishas But in this Instans thay Made not the Least Demand for all thare Sarvis."

Pond has left vivid pictures of Indian tribes and trading methods in what is now Wisconsin and Minnesota, but soon after the incident of the Yankton Sioux the last page of his manuscript is reached. The rest went to light fires in a Connecticut kitchen and we have lost forever many interesting and enlightening details of early North West Company history.

Peter Pond was the first map maker of the Nor'Westers. He began trading with Indians from Detroit in 1764, working steadily toward the west and north, through Michigan, Wisconsin, Minnesota, the Dakotas, Manitoba and, ultimately, into the Mackenzie River basin. He was always in the forefront. His curiosity preceded him, finally reached out to the Arctic and Pacific oceans. He obtained much information from Indians as to territory he never reached and on this and his knowledge he based the maps he drew.

These maps seem to show two deductions resulting from his theories. One was that the Rocky Mountains ended in the latitude of Lake Athabasca and a river flowed from Great Slave Lake into the Pacific Ocean only a short distance from Athabasca. This river, he believed, emptied into "Cook's River," the modern Cook Inlet in Southwestern Alaska. Pond's original deduction that Great Slave Lake emptied into the Arctic was correct.

This was proved in 1789 by Alexander Mackenzie but Pond had left the northwest the previous year. His suspicious nature was again in evidence, and he had just been implicated in the second "murder" of which he is accused. He did not believe his partners in the North West Company were treating him fairly and he went down to Grand Portage and on to Montreal, where he sold his share to William McGillivray for £800. Two years later he was back in his Connecticut birthplace, where he disappears from sight. It is known that he died in 1807. His autobiography was written after 1800.

That autobiography would have told several things of importance we should like to know about other matters than the history of the North West Company. It might have explained, for instance, why a North West partner stated in a letter that Pond

was preparing a map of the north for the Empress Catherine of Russia at a time when Russia was becoming interested in the northwest coast of America. And it might have cleared up the question of how much Pond was responsible in determining the present United States-Canadian boundary.

Charles Lindsey, in "Investigation of the Unsettled Boundaries of Ontario," says that the United States had no knowledge of the western country following the Revolutionary War, and no good map, but that in the treaty negotiations the American commissioners had Pond as a coach. Pond's ideas of true positions were inaccurate but he did realize the value of the country and is said to have suggested that the boundary line run from Grand Portage on the north shore of Lake Superior to the Lake of the Woods, thence to the sources of the Mississippi River and on westward along the forty-ninth parallel. The last was an impossibility, of course, and caused trouble later.

The United States Commissioners are said to have been ready to agree to a boundary running straight west from the center of Lake Champlain. Great Britain had a Pond map, but evidently it lay forgotten in some London office and her commissioners, equally ignorant of the importance of the country they were dividing, accepted the American suggestion.

Thus, if the information relative to Peter Pond's activities is correct, the United States possesses a strip of territory 350 miles wide stretching from the Pacific almost to the Atlantic, all because of the strange, twisted nature of an old Nor'Wester who did not believe his partners were according him a square deal.

Peter Pond joins Radisson. The real truth about the man will never be known. "He was odd in his manner and thought himself a philosopher," Alexander Mackenzie's cousin wrote. We know he was daring, that he was courageous, that he had vision. He enlisted in the British Army four times before he was of age. "From the fifth Generation downward we ware all waryers Ither by Sea or Land." He was wounded in battle. He was not afraid to call out a foe, or to give himself up when he was victor in a duel.

He probably was morose and suspicious of others' motives. Men of no education but great natural ability often are, and it is extremely difficult to get along with them. But great energy, intelli-

gence and curiosity he undoubtedly possessed. In 1785 Lieutenant Governor Hamilton sent this to Lord Sydney:

"Mr. Pond is an American by birth, he has long indulged a passion for making discoveries, he has pursued them indefatigably, being qualified by an excellent constitution to endure the fatigues, and by an active mind to encounter the many difficulties that naturally occur in the prosecution of such pursuits."

The chief accusations against Pond come from British writers in a time of much feeling against the "rebels" of the United States and these accusations have been enlarged upon by British writers ever since. His own version of any controversy has never been heard. We cannot escape the conviction that Peter Pond was a rather remarkable man. He was no saint, but it is unjust to call him a villain.

Unpopular though Pond may have been with his fellow traders, his actions, and even his morose nature, had at times an important influence on the early life of the North West Company. His successful expedition to Lake Athabasca in 1778 proved that the Frobishers were right in their efforts to reach that district.

Also the losses suffered by Montreal merchants and the wise outlook of the leaders in northwest exploration were having their effect. In the writings of Nor'Westers themselves no attempt is made to minimize conditions. Not only were disorders numerous but white men were being killed in struggles with one another and a complete demoralization threatened. Petty traders of disreputable character were pressing forward on the trail of the Frobishers and others, spreading the evil effects on the trade.

Conditions were becoming intolerable and in 1779 the first definite step was taken. Nine firms entered into an agreement for one year "by which the whole trade (meaning that beyond Lake Superior) was rendered common property." Stray references in letters and papers of the period indicate that even then it was known as the North West Company, or Society.

In essentials, the organization was little different than those two similar affairs of 1775 arranged on the spot on the Churchill and Saskatchewan Rivers. Seven firms contributed goods and men equally and received two shares each. Two firms contributed enough to be given one share each. It was really a pooling of in-

terests, with a division of profits on the share basis, an effort to stop the ruinous and destructive competition rather than to form a company.

It possessed one new feature that was to become characteristic of the North West Company. Some of the shares were owned by Montreal merchants, who furnished all the goods necessary. The men who carried these goods to the Indians and traded for furs furnished only their services. So well did the plan operate, in 1780 the partners entered into a nearly similar agreement that was to run for three years.

But individualism was not downed so easily. Members of the organization, according to North West Company writers, were still attracted by the sense of freedom engendered in the vast wilderness and by a lack of government restriction. They learned of new and unoccupied lands beyond and began to lay plans for independent activity upon the expiration of the agreement, with the result that at the end of two years they dissolved and reverted to the old free lance method.

But in Montreal the merchants who furnished the goods, and some of these had once been actively engaged in the trade, foresaw that in combination only could there be success and orderly progress. The Frobishers were leaders in this movement, as was Simon McTavish, who was to become one of the commanding figures in the company and a pioneer in the big business idea now taking form. The Montreal merchants were aided by the smallpox epidemic, which had brought the fur traffic almost to a complete stop. Few traders were left beyond the Great Lakes and in 1783 a new agreement was drawn up, still on a basis of sixteen shares. From then until the union with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, the North West Company existed continuously in one form or another.

As opposed to a chartered stock company, like the Hudson's Bay, the North West Company was merely an association of merchants and traders who agreed to conduct an enterprise together. Of the shares, some were held by merchants in Montreal, known as agents, the rest by the partners who wintered in the northwest. No capital was subscribed but each agent furnished goods

according to the shares held, either advancing the money necessary or borrowing it, and receiving interest in either event.

The "wintering partners," as the men in the interior were called, did not have to furnish capital or credit. They conducted the actual business of trading with the Indians. After long service, or through influence, a "wintering partner" held double shares and could retire with one and name a young employee to succeed him as owner of the other share. But merit was necessary for such promotion and a two-thirds majority vote was required. Clerks who entered the service for five or seven years were thus assured of partnership if they showed the proper qualities, and some ascended the ladder even before their apprenticeship expired. No man could be admitted as a partner who had not served his time in the trade.

The above was the agreement in 1787, when it became a twenty-share concern, and is essentially the method of organization that persisted to the end. The worth of such a system in a business conducted over a vast wilderness against competing forces is at once apparent. Every young clerk who went west from Montreal knew that, if he proved himself, he could rise to wealth and power. It was his company. He could look forward to a share in the profits, not to only a salary and a small pension. He saw many men acquire wealth through courage and an expenditure of energy and never forgot that he could do the same.

That is the form of organization that entered the field against the Hudson's Bay Company, which had not even yet begun to fight. When at last the chartered concern did enter the struggle its joints were stiff, muscles flabby, eyes weak from the long hibernation. The old Company limped ineffectually at the heels of the young thunderbolts from Montreal. It was outdistanced, outfought and outgeneraled.

In the spring of 1784, Joseph Frobisher, who had dealt such heavy blows to the "Gentlemen Adventurers" on the Saskatchewan and Churchill Rivers, went from Montreal to Grand Portage on the north shore of Lake Superior with Simon McTavish and there they presented to the traders from the interior the new agreement. It was signed by all except Peter Pond, who did not think he had been given his due share.

Pond's usual suspicions of others' motives may have led to his action, and there may have been an attempt to freeze him out. For Pond, after bringing success to one of the early partnerships, had brought adverse publicity to another.

In the fall of 1780 Pond and Jean Etienne Waden, a Swiss, were at Lac La Ronge, between the Saskatchewan and the Churchill Rivers, each the representative of rival partnerships that had merged interests for the winter. Waden had a clerk, Toussaint Le Sieur. In February, 1781, Pond and Waden are said to have come to blows, and in March, when they were together one evening, they are said to have quarreled again. Sieur was with them.

Joseph Fagniaut, a voyageur, in a sworn statement made later in Montreal, said he heard two musket shots and, on entering the log house, saw Waden lying on the floor. He had been shot in the leg. Sieur asked Waden if it were he who had killed him, and Waden said, "Be off, both of you, let me never see you again." He fainted, Fagniaut said, before he told who had shot him and he died soon afterward from loss of blood. Pond and Sieur were tried in Montreal but the case was dismissed for lack of jurisdiction or of evidence.

Practically nothing else is known of the incident, yet writers from that day to this have not hesitated to call Pond the murderer of Waden. But, as Alexander Mackenzie wrote, the suspicion of Pond remained, and this may have resulted in an effort to keep him out of the newly formed partnership.

Whatever the cause, Pond refused to sign the agreement and departed at once for Montreal. With him went Peter Pangman, also "an American" of German origin, a trader who had not been given any share in the organization, although one is said to have been due him.

It is known that in Montreal Pangman interested Gregory, McLeod and Company in an independent venture. The one reference we have to Pond is that he "deserted" Pangman and accepted the terms offered him by the North West Company.

The new firm organized by Gregory & McLeod established headquarters at Grand Portage in 1785. While much smaller than the North West Company, it possessed energetic members and was soon competing to the limits of exploration. Rivalry was

tense, though without serious disturbances, until news was brought to Grand Portage in the summer of 1787 that John Ross, a partner in the new firm, had been killed in an altercation with Peter Pond's men. Again we are without a clear understanding of the affair but it appears similar to others that occurred in fur trade rivalry. Ross is said to have been a quiet individual and Pond undoubtedly tried to frighten him out of the country. The slaying is not attributed directly to Pond but to his voyageurs, yet modern writers have not hesitated to credit Pond with another "murder."

Whatever the cause of the death of Ross, the incident had quick effect on the rival organizations. Neither the North West Company nor those associated with Gregory, McLeod and Company wished British authorities in Canada to believe they were murdering one another in the Indian country. As soon as the news reached Grand Portage in the summer they immediately joined forces in the agreement of 1787, which called for a twenty-share partnership. This continued without change until 1798, when the second and last split in the ranks of the Nor'Westers occurred.

Peter Pond retained his interest in the North West Company after the Ross affair but he remained in the Indian country only one year more. In that year we can link the old and the new in the Montreal movement. Peter Pond, about to depart after a quarter of a century in the fur trade, meets the most famous of all Nor'Westers, Alexander Mackenzie, as he enters the North West Company.

Pond represented the old type of trader, Mackenzie the new. Pond had energy and vision, but he could not get on with his fellows. Perhaps he did not have the stability to make his dreams come true. For a year he and Mackenzie were together in the Athabasca region. Then the veteran faded into obscurity and poverty. The youngster went on to accomplishment, fame and wealth.

## CHAPTER XVIII

We have now followed the North West Company through its formative years, have seen the early cut-throat and dissolute traders give way to strong men and ruinous methods yield to orderly progress. But with the formation of the sixteen-share company in 1784 and of the Gregory-McLeod opposition in the following year, a new element entered the fur trade, one destined to push it to unforeseen heights. We encounter for the first time the names of three Highlanders, Simon McTavish, William McGillivray and Alexander Mackenzie.

Simon McTavish was thirty-four years old when he and Joseph Frobisher went to Grand Portage in 1784 to present the sixteen-share agreement to the "wintering partners." He has been called the father of the North West Company. For twenty years he continued as Montreal agent. He had vast energy, a keen business mind, was aggressive, even domineering. In the end he brought friction and disruption. The "wintering partners" disliked him. They called him "Le Premier" and "The Marquis," but McTavish drove them to success.

William McGillivray, a nephew of McTavish, entered the fur trade at this time as a "wintering partner" and he was to continue through the life of the Company and retire with a fortune. In the end he helped Edward Ellice of London arrange the union of the great rivals.

These two men and other Highlanders brought the methods of big business to the fur trade. They are inseparably connected with the success of the enterprise, but to understand the real spirit of the Nor'Westers, to find in one man the vision, energy and accomplishment so characteristic of the organization, we must turn to Alexander Mackenzie.

This young Highlander was only fifteen years old when he left his native Stornoway for Montreal and obtained employment in



the firm of Gregory, McLeod and Company. Gregory was an Englishman, McLeod a Highlander. Both were destined to play a large part in North West Company affairs and they soon discovered the qualities in their young clerk which brought him fame. When he was twenty they advanced goods for a trading venture among the Indians near Detroit, and Mackenzie started into the wilderness on his own.

The year he left Montreal, Peter Pond and Peter Pangman arrived and Gregory and McLeod decided to act on Pangman's suggestion and to inaugurate a new venture into the northwest. In arranging the details they provided a partnership for Mackenzie without consulting him and McLeod went to Detroit to inform the young trader. Employed by the firm were Roderick Mackenzie, a cousin of Alexander, just arrived from the Highlands of Scotland, and James Finlay, son of the James Finlay who had made a quick fortune on the Saskatchewan soon after the fall of French power. They were hardly more than boys, these two clerks, but both were to rise to prominence in the North West Company.

Today, in reading the letters and book of Alexander Mackenzie, one is immediately impressed by the man's determination, courage and ability. The partners in the new enterprise must have been equally aware of these qualities for they placed this youth of twenty-one in charge of the Churchill River district and sent him on into the wilderness with canoes, men and goods worth a large sum to battle the older and experienced Nor'Westers.

Mackenzie made good. He was returned to the Churchill the following year. A struggle not unlike that of Highland clans was being waged, bitter and relentless, but Highland boys were men and we find Alexander, aged twenty-two, sending these bits of advice to his cousin, Roderick, who had been placed in charge of a post in Alexander's district:

"Should opponents come along side of you, you must do as they do. . . . You will require to give them (the Indians) many presents, as they will often tell you that they will get more at Small's post (a North West establishment) . . . Petit Bœuf (an Indian) is very troublesome at times, so you must take care of yourself . . . You never met with so troublesome Indians as the

Chipewyans, continually asking things for nothing . . . I wish you a quiet winter."

Roderick Mackenzie, "Dear Rory" in Alexander's letters, enjoyed a quiet winter. He was opposed to William McGillivray but the two remained on friendly terms, despite moments of tension, and Roderick obtained his share of fur.

Upon the union of the two factions following the death of Ross, Alexander Mackenzie was sent to the Athabasca country with Peter Pond. The contest had been expensive for the smaller concern. Alexander, in a letter to Roderick, said four successful years would be necessary to wipe out his indebtedness. But once the two firms had merged the bitter struggle was forgotten, and the North West Company rose swiftly to power and wealth.

That winter of 1787-1788 at Athabasca saw the linking of the old and the new of which we have spoken in the preceding chapter. No references are made in Roderick's writings or Alexander's letters to geographical conjecture but much of it must have enlivened the long nights. We do know Pond's interest in the country was absorbing. He had already prepared maps and had seen more of this far land than any other white man, and by now he had abandoned his theory that the Mackenzie basin drained into the Arctic Ocean. The great river to the north, of which Indians had told him, must flow into the Pacific, and it undoubtedly was the "Cook's River" recently discovered by the British navigator.

A little later Alexander Dalrymple, who had attacked Hearne's discoveries, spoke with great contempt of Pond's maps and theories. Pond was inaccurate. Only astronomical observations could check positions after the tortuous canoe journey of nearly three thousand miles from Montreal, or reconcile the vague and often imaginary descriptions of Indians. But Pond at least was curious about the vast country he had found and the possibilities it entailed and had more knowledge of it than any other living man. That winter he must have talked much, and Alexander Mackenzie must have been enthused and discussed exploration with Roderick, for the next summer we find Alexander begging his cousin to reconsider a determination to abandon the fur trade. Roderick would not comply until he learned that Alexander's new dream of explorations depended upon it.

In 1788 Pond left the north, never to return. Alexander Mackenzie went to Grand Portage, brought back the Athabasca outfit and sent Roderick on to Athabasca Lake to build Fort Chipewyan. The next summer, when he was twenty-five years old, he began the journey that led to the discovery of the second largest river system on the continent.

Several features of Alexander Mackenzie's feat in 1789 are distinctive. He was practically the same age as Samuel Hearne when the Hudson's Bay seaman started from Churchill twenty years earlier. But Mackenzie was a "wintering partner" in charge of a large and important district and not an employee. He was forced to sandwich his exploration between necessary tasks. Time was vital. Mackenzie went to the Arctic Ocean and back in one hundred and two days. Hearne was absent two and a half years.

Hearne traveled with Indians who knew the country and had been on the Coppermine River. The Indians at Lake Athabasca had only vague rumors of what lay beyond Great Slave Lake. White men had gone to that huge inland sea in 1786 and five had drowned in Slave River rapids. No one, white or red, knew what lay to the north, or west, whichever way the great river turned. Strange tribes, perhaps hostile, were reported, and if the sea were reached the dreaded Eskimos would be found. Despite all Peter Pond's conjecture, all the reports he and Mackenzie could get from Indians, both route and destination were unknown.

There is little doubt now but that Mackenzie believed he would reach the Pacific. If there were no Northwest Passage by sea, men's goal in that day was a river route across the American continent. The railroad was undreamed of. Water travel alone was possible. Peter Pond believed firmly Great Slave Lake was not far from the western ocean and that its outlet flowed southwest across the northern end of the Rockies. Mackenzie wanted to prove this true. Three years later, in a letter to Roderick, he referred to the mighty stream he had discovered and which bears his name, as "River Disappointment."

This detracts in no way from his achievement. Mackenzie opened up a vast fur district, a highway to the north that carried all the traffic until the coming of the airplane. His brother Nor'-Westers pressed on after him and fur posts today line the banks

of the mighty river and its tributaries. But in 1789 an inexhaustible fund of courage and determination were necessary to make such a journey.

Alexander Mackenzie was the first explorer in Canada to make adequate preparations for a swift and efficient expedition. He used a birch bark canoe large enough to carry himself, four French Canadians, a German voyageur and the wives of two of his men. The Indian women, of course, were essential for cooking and garment making. He carried provisions, bags of pemmican and plenty of ammunition, besides a gun for each man and presents for any Indians they might meet. He arranged also for several Indians to accompany him in their canoes and as interpreter he employed "The English Chief," a Chipewyan who had long traded at Fort Churchill and knew Hearne and Matonabbee.

Nor did Mackenzie forget that first of all he was a fur trader. He took with him Laurent Leroux, who had established a post on the south side of Great Slave Lake three years before, to build a new post on the north side of the lake to make contact with the Yellow Knife Indians beyond.

The expedition started on June 3, 1789, in the afternoon, but thenceforth we get an idea of Mackenzie's driving tactics. Day after day the entries give embarking time as "3 A.M.," "2:30 A.M.," "4 A.M." The days were long. June 15th Mackenzie could read at 11:30 o'clock at night, and he wasted little daylight.

Great Slave Lake was covered with ice and they waited five days at Leroux's post. As soon as the ice began to drift, Mackenzie started, but because of the floes nine days were spent in crossing the lake, which is larger than Lake Ontario. He made the traverse in canoes on approximately the same course Hearne is believed to have followed on the ice in January, 1772.

Once across, Leroux went up the big bay on the north side to establish a post while Mackenzie turned westward in search of the outflowing river. A gale and an Indian guide who lost the way brought danger and delay and it was not until June 29 that the great river of the north was reached.

Progress was rapid after that. Strange Indians were encountered, and a way opened to trade. Food was cached for the return. The Rocky Mountains, snow-spotted, appeared to the west.

Dog Rib and Slave Indians had told preposterous stories of the lower river which frightened Mackenzie's Indians and it was with difficulty that he could persuade them to continue.

A terrible waterfall was foretold, and it proved to be an easily navigated rapid. They reached the land of the Hare Indians, of the Quarreller Indians beyond, and at last, on July 10th, more than a thousand miles from their starting point, found the river splitting into many channels. They had discovered the delta of the Mackenzie, the mouth of the river which today is still the great highway of fur land.

Here for the first time the explorer realized that he would not reach the Pacific Ocean. He took an observation and fixed his position as 67 degrees 47 minutes north latitude. He had not believed himself so far north, knew now that he was headed for the Arctic Ocean. His disappointment must have been intense, but he determined to find the outlet.

Troubles arose. An Indian guide they had picked up did not know the way through the maze of islands. The Chipewyan Indians were badly frightened. The situation was serious but Mackenzie would not give up. He persuaded the party to go on and promised that he would turn back after seven days. Provisions were becoming scarce.

They followed the middle channel, came at last to the sea, but the immediate impression one gains in reading Mackenzie's journal is that he did not know he had reached it. He writes of "the lake." He saw a huge expanse of ice a little way beyond the last large island, on which he camped, and when the tide flooded his baggage he believed it due to a heavy wind. The next day he knew it was the tide, and measured it.

Not once in his journal does he speak of having reached the sea, though he marked it so on a later map. The conclusion one reaches is that Mackenzie was so greatly disappointed in not finding the Pacific he did not much care, at the moment, and he gives an indication of this when he wrote:

"My people could not, at this time, refrain from expressions of real concern, that they were obliged to return without reaching the sea; indeed the hope of attaining this object encouraged them to bear, without repining, the hardships of our unrelenting

voyage. For some time past their spirits were animated by the expectation that another day would bring them to the *Mer d' ouest*; and even in our present situation they declared their readiness to follow me wherever I should be pleased to lead them."

On the return voyage Mackenzie hoped to get further information about a great river to the westward, the Yukon, of which Indians had told him on his way downstream. But the Indians had gone hunting and the weary journey back against the current was continued. They reached Fort Chipewyan on September 12.

Alexander Mackenzie remained on Athabasca Lake that winter and went down to the annual meeting of the North West Company at Grand Portage on Lake Superior in the summer of 1790. Three days after his arrival he sent a brief note to Roderick in which is the sentence: "My expedition was hardly spoken of, but that is what I expected."

On this phrase alone many writers have hung the charge that the Nor'Westers were not interested in exploration. All these writers are antagonistic to the North West Company. All are pro-Hudson's Bay. The charge is ridiculous, in view of all the North West Company accomplished, and of the meager achievements of the Hudson's Bay before union in 1821. And none explained the circumstances under which Mackenzie wrote those few words.

He wrote briefly and hurriedly. His partners in the company were busy with reorganization plans, which were put through in the short time the "winterers" and the agents from Montreal could meet. And returns from Lake Athabasca had not been of the best. Chipewyan Indians were still going to Fort Churchill to trade. Mackenzie was despondent, too. A subsequent letter to Roderick is a startling revelation of a mind pressed by loneliness and thwarted ambition.

Especially in North West Company annals have historians been prone to indict the concern throughout the entire half century of its existence by giving prominence to a single incident or statement. Nor do they ever separate the North West Company movement into its various parts. They say Mackenzie's discoveries were due to individual effort, that the company itself had no interest in exploration. Yet a few years later the North West Com-

pany employed a surveyor whom the Hudson's Bay Company had forbidden to make further discoveries, and in less than two decades that man traveled fifty thousand miles to make the first accurate maps of North America from Lake Superior to the Pacific and from Missouri to the Peace. All this was done under North West Company auspices.

The Highlanders who swept so swiftly from Montreal to the Pacific, scattering countless trading stations as they went, believed exploration paid, and they proved it.

## CHAPTER XIX

The North West Company underwent one of its many reorganizations when Alexander Mackenzie reached Grand Portage in the summer of 1790. For some reason unexplained, the partners took an oath of secrecy and the new agreement was not divulged until 1791. It was still a twenty-share concern. Simon McTavish and the Frobishers had formed a company which acted as the Montreal agents and were accorded six shares. Alexander Mackenzie held two shares. The agreement was to last for seven years.

Mackenzie returned to Athabasca that winter and evidently still brooded about his failure to reach the Pacific Ocean. He had also failed to determine the longitude of Fort Chipewyan and was not satisfied with his astronomical skill. Hearne's figures had been attacked and his story doubted, and Mackenzie was not the sort to accept similar charges against himself. Accordingly, he left Athabasca for England, where he spent the winter of 1791-1792 acquiring further mathematical knowledge and obtaining the necessary instruments.

In England he learned that Alexander Dalrymple and others were interested in connecting Cook's explorations in Alaska with those in the Athabasca country. The Hudson's Bay Company had been asked to send a ship in another effort to find a sea passage out of Hudson Bay and the Colonial Office had asked the "Gentlemen Adventurers" to send an astronomer to Lake Athabasca. Mackenzie met this man, Philip Turnor, on his way to England and did not think he would get far.

Thus, when Mackenzie returned to Canada in 1792 he went at once to Fort Chipewyan, where, according to his instructions, preparations were already being made for an attempt to reach the Pacific by way of Peace River. The North West Company had been established on this large stream for six years and now its policy of making exploration pay its own way is shown. Young James Finlay had already gone up the Peace to build a new fort



beyond the Company's first establishment, while in the spring two men had been sent much farther to cut timbers for another in which Mackenzie was to winter. The rich returns from this big district, which were to continue without serious competition by the Hudson's Bay Company, are evidence of Mackenzie's qualities as a trader.

Even while preparing to reach the Pacific, he did not neglect business. He learned of Lesser Slave Lake, made contacts with Indians, and in the spring sent out six canoes loaded with fur and provisions. The next day, May 9, 1793, when he was twenty-nine years old, Mackenzie started westward.

He had one canoe manned by six French Canadians, two of whom had accompanied him to the Arctic in 1789. He had also two Indians to act as hunters and interpreters and as a lieutenant, Alexander McKay, a valuable employee and later partner of the North West Company, a man of great experience in the wilderness.

The winter and spring were difficult for Mackenzie. His letters to Roderick, who was at Fort Chipewyan, indicate despondency at times. Indians promised to go, and deserted. Stories of the terrible rivers in the Rocky Mountains reached the fort and his men were hesitant about accompanying him. And, once they had started, the river, swollen by melting snows, forewarned of what they might expect.

Two distinct impressions are gained in reading Mackenzie's journal of the expedition. The first is of inconceivable difficulties, of constant danger, of the hopelessness of attempting further progress. Disaster threatened always. Disaster did come. Strange Indian tribes that had never seen white men were first suspicious, then hostile. Rivers were torrents. Great mountain ranges barred their way. Sources of widely separated water systems lay close together and no one knew whither a stream led. Drama galore is packed into that story. Time and again the situation was appalling. And always there is the thought of the terrible return.

Few journeys of exploration have been beset with more dangers or obstacles, and as the story progresses the second impression gathers force. It is that not men or anything physical carried that expedition across the mountains and down to the sea but an un-

conquerable determination. Something almost inhuman characterizes Mackenzie's will. Time and again he would have been justified in turning back.

This was particularly true almost at the very beginning. For twenty-five miles the Peace, in bursting out from the Rockies, flows through a cañon. It was hopeless to attempt to ascend such a stream, which was only a succession of rapids and falls between high, straight walls, but Mackenzie drove his men to it. Day after day they struggled, daring death each moment, gaining inches in hours.

In the end even Mackenzie's will was defeated. The canoe, already battered, and the supplies were hauled up a cliff, and then that will was released against a new obstacle. Scouts had been sent ahead and had learned the river swung in a great arc. Mackenzie set his men to cutting a trail through seven miles of forest and over mountains to the stream above the cañon, and across that portage canoe and equipment were carried.

But they only reached a land of more turbulent mountain streams. The canoe was wrecked and another built. All the musket balls were lost in a rapids. In the valleys between the mountains throughout British Columbia rivers have a habit of doubling on their courses and for the next twenty years were to mislead explorers. Mackenzie, without any knowledge of the many streams except vague Indian reports, could do little more than choose blindly. He found the Fraser and believed it to be the Columbia, deserted it because he knew he could not go to its mouth and return in one season.

Time and again the Indians threatened trouble. His companions had to be urged on continually. Once mutiny developed. The men could not forget what lay behind them and how all the toil and danger must be repeated before they could regain the post far down the Peace River. And that post, remember, was the westernmost establishment of white men and between three and four thousand miles from Montreal.

In such situations, Mackenzie's courage and determination were incredible. He once told his men that, if they refused to continue, he would proceed alone, and the sincerity of the statement was convincing.

Mackenzie found the Pacific, at the end of one of the many long inlets that indent the British Columbia coast, but he was not satisfied merely to taste salt water. He wanted to behold the open sea and, borrowing a dugout from the Indians at the modern Bella Coola, Mackenzie and his men paddled down North Bentinck Arm.

Again disaster threatened. The coast Indians, always the most treacherous and murderous on the continent, became hostile. The situation was desperate. The white men went ashore to take a stand on a large rock, and the savages decided it was better not to attack. But their attitude turned Mackenzie back. Before leaving he mixed red pigment and grease and wrote on the rock, "Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand seven hundred and ninety-three." 7793

"From Canada, by land!"

For the first time in the 301 years since Columbus discovered America, the continent had been crossed north of Mexico. For centuries explorers had dreamed of such a thing. Verendrye had spent a lifetime at the task, had died almost in the shadow of the great barrier range. Paved roads, rails and the conquered air preclude our realization of the true significance of Mackenzie's feat. People in a safe, swift world thrill to Lindbergh's thirty-six hours of accomplishment. The young Nor'Wester's will and courage were sustained through weeks and months. For sheer, bulldog grit, nothing has excelled it.

Mackenzie and his crew won, but they were far from safety. Some of his men were ill. A continent lay between them and Montreal. Nearly a thousand miles of hardship and danger separated them from the nearest post on the Peace. Ammunition was almost exhausted. Pitiful and forlorn was that little band as it started back, but most poignant of all is the knowledge we now have that Captain Vancouver with his two ships had surveyed those waters only a month earlier and could have afforded Mackenzie and his men a well earned and comfortable means of egress from a forbidding country.

Mackenzie went back. There was nothing else to do. Again they conquered the rivers and the mountains, awed the Indians by their

courage, and on August 24th reached their starting place on Peace River.

Later Mackenzie went down to Fort Chipewyan, where he wintered, and the next summer he proceeded to Grand Portage and on to Montreal and England. In letters to Roderick Mackenzie he had spoken several times of the difficult lot of a man who spent his winters in the interior, and now he seems to have determined never to return to it. Nor did he. Before leaving for England in 1795 he became an agent of the North West Company and, though he journeyed to Grand Portage each summer to meet the "wintering partners," he never again went west of Lake Superior.

Alexander Mackenzie not only accomplished two great exploratory tasks but he affords us the first instance in Canada of the explorer rewarded. The policy of the North West Company was in part responsible for this. Mackenzie was an active partner, not an employee, and he was a man of vision and of business ability. He prospered in the fur trade, for the Nor'Westers were expanding rapidly despite a split in their ranks, and while living in Montreal he won the friendship of the Duke of Kent, fourth son of George III and father of the future Queen Victoria.

Mackenzie was made much of in Montreal but when he went to London in 1801 and published the journal of his two expeditions, including a sketch of the fur trade in the same volume, he was lionized and fêted and in February, 1802, he was knighted in recognition of his explorations. Again the Duke of Kent was his friend, but Sir Alexander did not permit civilization to soften him. Years earlier he had dreamed of a real and comprehensive monopoly in the fur trade, a scheme he tried to put into effect, and he was also engaged in a struggle far more bitter than had occurred previously and which exceeded, perhaps, the intensity of the final rivalry with the Hudson's Bay. For again the Highlanders were at one another's throats.

The Mackenzies, the McGillivrays, the McTavishes, the McDonalds and the McLeods, the Campbells, the Finlays, the Frasers, the Leiths and the Grants—Highlanders all, those Nor'Westers, and when there was no one else to fight, they fought among themselves. As we will show later, the Hudson's Bay Company had offered little opposition until the close of the

eighteenth century, and not until the "Gentlemen Adventurers" finally became active did the men from Scotland forget their differences and unite against the common foe.

Trouble had been brewing before Alexander Mackenzie went to England in 1794. Simon McTavish, principal agent of the company in Montreal, was aggressive and efficient but he was domineering. He wrote sarcastic letters to the "wintering partners." He was perhaps the first exponent of business efficiency on this continent, and because he had never been a "winterer" he probably had little sympathy for the troubles and trials of the men who carried the trade against terrific odds.

Perhaps McTavish was not entirely responsible, but in 1795 several partners withdrew from the North West Company and, backed by Forsythe, Richardson & Co. of Montreal, struck out in opposition to the old concern. The sympathies of Alexander Mackenzie probably were with the rebels but he had become a member of McTavish, Frobisher & Co. and remained with the firm, which was the principal agent of the North West Company. He reserved the right to withdraw at the end of three years.

This he did. Feeling had developed between him and Simon McTavish and, though the "wintering partners" begged Mackenzie to remain, saying he was the only agent who had their confidence, he persisted and later withdrew from the McTavish Frobisher Company and went to England.

The battle went on in his absence. Roderick Mackenzie was chosen to succeed his cousin in the old company, and Alexander became so angry they did not correspond for several years. Two North West Companies, the old and the new, now spread across the plains and forests of Canada.

Alexander Mackenzie was not idle in England. His book, published while he was there, indicates how much thought he had given the fur trade, and he was one of the first, if not the first, to foresee the advantages of union with the Hudson's Bay. In making this suggestion he wrote that "the trade might be carried on with a very superior degree of advantage, both private and public, under the privileges of their charter (that of the Hudson's Bay) and would prove in fact the complete fulfillment of the conditions in which it was first granted. It would be an equal injus-

tice to either party to be excluded from the option of such an undertaking; for if one has the right of charter, has not the other a right of prior possession, as being successors to the subjects of France?"

In 1801 Mackenzie urged upon the Colonial Secretary the advantages of a union of the old and new North West Companies, the Hudson's Bay Company, the East Indian Company and the South Sea Company. Another proposition was that, if the Hudson's Bay would not join the Nor'Westers, the government fix a fair value for the Hudson's Bay stock so that others might control the Company, men who would do the work of pushing the trade. Still another was that the Hudson's Bay grant a passage through a Hudson Bay port for North West Company goods.

The next year, when he was knighted, Sir Alexander proposed to the British Government that it establish civil and military posts at the mouth of the Columbia River, at Nootka on the west coast of Vancouver Island and farther north in Sea Otter Harbour; that the exclusive rights to fish and trade possessed by the East India and South Sea Companies be revoked, and that the Hudson's Bay Company give a license of traffic through its territory.

Sir Alexander had vision. He foresaw how the fur trade of the far west would be developed, how Americans would threaten British extension there, and how, once a fur commerce on the western coast were established, British traders would be hampered by the East India monopoly of traffic on the Pacific. He foresaw, too, the necessity of exclusive rights to conduct the fur trade if the trade itself were not to be ruined. All these problems arose, but the British government was not greatly interested. It asked first that the old and the new North West Companies be united. Had Mackenzie's recommendations prevailed, the Oregon question probably would have been avoided and American occupation on the Pacific prevented.

But all his schemes failed and he went back to Canada to become head of the new North West Company. Because of the letters "X Y" used to mark its bales of goods to distinguish them from those marked "N W," the new concern was most generally

known as the X Y Company, though it was also called Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company.

Rivalry between it and the older organization had been intense but with Mackenzie's return violence became frequent, the feeling more bitter, and the Indian country was drowned in liquor. Fifteen years later a book published in London by the North West Company gave the following figures: In 1800, spoken of as the "first year of the Company," 10,098 gallons; 1803, North West Company, 16,299 gallons, opposing traders, 5,000, making a total of 21,299; 1806, after union of North West and X Y Companies, 10,800; 1807, 9,500 gallons; 1808, 9,000 gallons.

As factional fights are always the most bitter political struggles, and civil wars excel in venom, this split in the ranks of the Nor'-Westers produced a virulence new to fur land. Details are few but we discover hints of the feeling when reading journals of the period. Highland clan passions found a means of expression.

But so inexhaustible was the energy and ambition of these Scotsmen, expansion of trade did not suffer. Rather, it increased. New territory was opened. The network of trade routes spread. Each year found new and more distant posts. For a thousand pounds a year, Simon McTavish rented the King's Posts, legacy of French rule, and the Nor'-Westers spread along the Gulf of St. Lawrence and up into Labrador and Quebec, undermining the Hudson's Bay from the south and east as well as from the west. They even sent a ship into Hudson Bay itself and built two posts within a few yards of Hudson's Bay Company establishments.

Fur trade receipts grew, but the factional warfare was destructive. Indians were demoralized by the rivalry. Summer pelts were taken and restocking of animals thus diminished. Liquor was used lavishly. The entire commerce, now stretching from the Atlantic almost to the Pacific, was threatened with destruction. Simon McTavish, backed by the North West Company, Sir Alexander Mackenzie leading the X Y, staged a battle of giants, urged on the rival clans.

Inevitable ruin was averted by chance. In 1804 Simon McTavish died. He had taken that rough partnership of 1784 and built it into a terribly effective machine, yet the very qualities which gave him leadership had brought the dissention which re-

sulted in the formation of the X Y Company. Now that disrupting factor was eliminated. The opposing forces came together at once and without difficulty. All the elements in the trade to the north and west of Lake Superior were united in a gigantic 100-share concern with an agreement to remain in existence for eighteen years.

Forty years had passed since the Pontiac uprising was quelled. In that period the North West Company movement had grown from the first unrelated efforts of individuals into the present powerful organization. Its operations became of vast consequence to Montreal and all settled Canada. Its partners were among the most powerful citizens of the metropolis. Family, social, business and political connections enabled it to marshal public opinion and provincial government behind it. It maintained strong business connections in London. It assumed the initiative in the extension of British influence and power. It became a virtual monopoly, crushing its smaller rivals. Only the Hudson's Bay Company stood in its path, and at last, united, flushed with success, dreaming big dreams, the most powerful organization in the New World gave serious attention to the "Gentlemen Adventurers."



## CHAPTER XX

We left the Hudson's Bay Company with the return of Samuel Hearne from Coppermine River in 1772, though there was the picture of disaster ten years later when La Perouse captured Fort Churchill and York Factory. Since that time the Company has scarcely touched events, and for a very good reason. The Hudson's Bay contributed nothing of importance. It gave us no drama, and no energy or achievement in comparison with the accomplishments of the Nor'Westers.

Perhaps it is because the Hudson's Bay Company has existed for more than two and one-half centuries that historians have assumed its progress is unbroken and always expanding, that the Company today is a direct result of the first efforts of friends of Charles II. So firmly do writers adhere to this postulation they are certain the defense against the encroachments of the Montreal traders began at once and grew steadily. They assume, too, without question, that from the time Curry and Finlay arrived on the Saskatchewan in 1767 a bitter struggle developed between the rival forces.

A large part of the misconception is due to the whole false legend that has been built up around the Hudson's Bay Company. So strong has this legend become it has misled even the historian. General statements have been common, and in no period have they led to greater misrepresentation than in that between the fall of French power in 1760 and the union of the rivals in 1821. The Hudson's Bay Company eventually became a powerful monopoly, a beautifully effective and faithfully served corporation, but it was never that in the first century and a half of its existence. The struggle with the North West Company was bitter and destructive, but only in the last few years of the fifty in which the two concerns were rivals. Interpretation of events has always been in error because component parts in the story of the Hudson's Bay, and even of each period, have never been separated.

/ The building of Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan in 1774 is universally accepted as the date of the Company's awakening, though one writer finds in Hearne's Coppermine journey the initial step. "The sleeping giant was aroused at last," and "The bear wakened from his long hibernation on the shores of the Bay," represent the usual type of comment. And why not? The success, if not the very life, of the Company was threatened. To fight back would have been natural and instinctive. But the astounding fact is that the Hudson's Bay Company did nothing of the sort.

We have already seen how the Company sought in 1770 to buy honesty and industry in its service by raising salaries and paying bonuses, and how governors of posts on the Bay had failed to report to London that the French had established themselves firmly in the interior. The same conditions persisted after the appearance of Curry and Finlay. For five years nothing was done. Then appeared the fourth inland traveler in Hudson's Bay annals, and because of the Company's policy of secrecy even his name was unknown to the two men who wrote the first comprehensive histories of the "Gentlemen Adventurers."

There exists today the journal of Mathew Cocking, and it, like Hendry's, was probably saved by Andrew Graham, who had now become governor of York Factory. Cocking fixed the date of Finlay's arrival on the Saskatchewan when, on finding an old post on the big river in 1772, he commented that it had been erected by Finlay five years earlier. Andrew Graham, in a marginal note beside a reference to Curry's presence there, said, "Mr. Currie's encroachment was the reason I sent Mr. Cocking inland."

The Cocking manuscript is headed thus: "Being the journal of a journey performed by Mr. Mathew Cocking, second factor at York Fort, in order to take a view of the inland country, and to promote the Hudson's Bay Company interest, whose trade is diminishing by the Canadians yearly intercepting natives on their way to the settlements, 1772-1773."

Cocking did not explore, or make any attempt to do so. He traveled with the Assiniboines and followed the tracks of Kelsey and Hendry, going farther than the first but not nearly so far as the latter. His efforts are particularly indicative of the Hudson's

Bay attitude and policy. Like Kelsey eighty years earlier, he did not carry an adequate supply of trade goods to the Indians but sought to induce them to take their fur to the Bay for barter. The French had carried goods to those same Indians from Montreal for nearly a quarter of a century, the Canadians were now doing the same thing, but the Hudson's Bay adhered to its first idea.

Like Hendry, Cocking obtained information of value to his employers. He was impressed by the hold of the French on the Indians. "It surprises me to perceive what a warm side the natives hath to the French Canadians." He was startled, too, to find a French trader who did not keep watch at night, though Indians were in the post.

Cocking pressed his missionary work. "The Natives all promise faithfully to go down to the Forts next year & not to trade with the pedlars: but they are such notorious liars there is no believing them."

Poor Cocking. He undoubtedly did all he could for his employers but he was helpless. Kelsey accomplished something eighty years earlier when he led strange tribes to the Bay. He was without opposition. Hendry tried the same plan in 1754, and the French obtained nearly all the fur. Now, with conditions completely changed, with the Indians accustomed to having goods brought to them, Cocking was sent out to lead those same tribes a thousand miles to York Factory on a route sprinkled with French Canadian and Scotch traders whose goods were on the spot.

Cocking knew he could not prevail against such a situation. "In sound policy they preserve their stock of liquor to intercept us on our way to the settlements," he wrote in reference to Curry and others. The Indians were intercepted, and Cocking reached York Factory with very little fur.

In the manner peculiar to it at the time, the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to meet the situation by purchasing service. After the fall of French power a few voyageurs and small traders, stranded in the wilderness, went down to the Company posts on the Bay to find employment. With the coming of the Montreal merchants, the Company employed all such men who would de-

sert the Canadians, paying them large salaries and sending them among the Indians with small trade outfits.

In other words, it bought the services of men who would break contracts and desert employers in the wilderness, and it obtained that type of service. Cocking gave an instance of it in his journal. Louis Primo, who had been sent to the Saskatchewan with trade goods, calmly announced to Cocking when they met in 1773 that he was not going to York Factory with the fur he had purchased. Cocking protested that "he was doing wrong as he was under written contract to serve the Company; but all to no purpose." Primo paddled off to Lake Winnipeg and the Hudson's Bay never saw its fur.

Cocking returned to York Factory in June, 1773. The Hudson's Bay Company minutes of May of that year state that after considering "interruptions to trade" by "Canadian Pedlars," the Governor and Committee "do decide on mature deliberation to send Samuel Hearne to establish a fort at Basquia."

"On mature deliberation!"

When the "Canadian Pedlars" had reached Basquia six years earlier! When the French had been there twenty or more years before that! But the "Old Worthies" in London evidently had no conception whatever of conditions or methods in the fur trade. They clung to the original idea that the Indians should come down to the Bay with their fur and save the Company the trouble and expense of going inland to get it. Even after Hearne obeyed their orders and built Cumberland House in 1774, they would not abandon the idea. Writers assure us that the ancient company was aroused to action. Yet *a dozen years elapsed before it built another post in that district*, although there is a vague reference to two outposts a little way up Saskatchewan five years after the establishment of Cumberland House.

It is astounding, incredible. Yet it is true. The Montreal traders were spreading all through that vast land. The Frobishers, Alexander Henry, Peter Pond and others immediately nullified the effects of Cumberland House by going past it and meeting the Indians beyond. They did more than that. They continued to press forward, far up the Saskatchewan, beyond to Churchill River, down the Athabasca. And from the first they adopted the

French system. They carried goods to the Indians, did not compel the natives to make long journeys. They built posts by the score.

Yet at the end of a dozen years the Hudson's Bay Company could boast of Cumberland House alone, and possibly two outposts thereof.

Alexander Mackenzie, in his sketch of the fur trade published in 1801, seemed astounded and disgusted by the inertia of the Hudson's Bay Company. No bias is evident in his writing and, while some of his earlier facts are from hearsay, and erroneous, his comments on his own experiences and observations are accurate and valuable. Of this period he wrote:

"The traders from Canada succeeded for several years in getting the largest proportion of their furs, till the year 1793, when the servants of that company thought proper to send people amongst them [and why they did not do so before is best known to themselves], for the purpose of the trade and securing their credits, which the Indians were apt to forget. From the short distance they had to come, and the quality of goods supplied, the trade has, in a great measure, reverted to them, as the merchants from Canada could not meet them upon equal terms."

Mackenzie summed up the early competition when he wrote in 1801: "From this period (founding of Cumberland House) to the present time, they (the Hudson's Bay people) have been following the Canadians to their different establishments, while, on the contrary, there is not a solitary instance that the Canadians have followed them; and there are many trading posts which they have not yet attained."

Details of the advance of the two companies are not yet complete. They are taken from countless journals and authorities differ. One places the first Hudson's Bay establishment on the Saskatchewan after Cumberland House, in 1787, another eight years earlier. It is said that the Hudson's Bay sent Robert Longmore up the Churchill to Athabasca in 1787 but he never got that far. There is no record of a Hudson's Bay post on Lake Athabasca until 1802, when Peter Fidler arrived. He built two outposts, one up the Peace and the other down the Slave. But the Nor'Westers had been on these two rivers since 1786, and after three or four years Fidler left and the posts were abandoned. *Not until 1815*

did the Hudson's Bay make a second effort to reach this immense and valuable district.

In the south, between Lake Superior and James Bay, Canadian traders had been active since 1767. The Hudson's Bay is said to have founded Martin Falls House on the Albany River in 1782 but, as in so many of its first efforts, it did not go far from salt water. Meanwhile the North West Company worked into the Albany district from Nipigon. Duncan Cameron, a dour Scot who has left us a full description of that forest area, its people and the trade rivalry, arrived in 1785. The next year the Hudson's Bay built Osnaburgh House and, using that as a base, displayed more activity than in any other district. In 1789 it was on the Red River but failed in an effort to build on the Assiniboine. It is said to have been on the Lake of the Woods in 1793 and to have first descended the Winnipeg River in that year.

The Hudson's Bay Company reached the Souris River in western Manitoba in 1793. It had more than North West opposition here. Traders from Prairie du Chien in southwestern Wisconsin had worked through to this country and in 1794 five interests were on the Souris, four rivals of the Hudson's Bay in the depths of Rupert's Land. On the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers the Hudson's Bay pushed on westward, but always it was behind the North West posts. In 1797 the first real victory of the Hudson's Bay is recorded when it almost ruined the North West Company trade on River Tremblante by carrying goods on horses from Swan River to the Assiniboine in three days. Thus it arrived a month ahead of the Nor'Westers and obtained all the best furs.

Both companies worked south to the Missouri, though at first by sending freemen with small outfits, and both made more ambitious efforts there seven years before the arrival of Lewis and Clark.

The general statement is frequently made, and evidently is based on Mackenzie's book, that the Hudson's Bay Company was not so successful in the south and west as in the north, which means the Churchill and Athabasca Rivers. This undoubtedly was true, but for a time only. It is to be noted that the Chipewyans and northern Crees had never made contact with the French. For one hundred years they had traded only with the Hudson's Bay

Company. Mackenzie touched upon this when he wrote the following in a letter in February, 1789:

"A great number of Chipewyans who went to Hudson Bay last summer came this winter to our new establishment on the Lake (Athabasca). They traded largely at the Bay, and were highly satisfied with their reception. They say they had taken seven months to perform their journey; yet they seemed inclined to return."

Writing in May of that year, just before his journey down the Mackenzie to the Arctic Ocean, he said: "The greatest dependence on this place at present is on Peace River. The Chipewyans are in the habit of trading in Hudson's Bay."

The Peace was a rich territory, and the Nor'Westers held it exclusively almost to the end, but the condition Mackenzie outlined in 1801 did not long continue. The Nor'Westers began to get more of the Chipewyans' fur and the Hudson's Bay Company, instead of meeting the situation energetically, made one of its usual abortive efforts by building posts half way between Lake Athabasca and Fort Churchill.

Yet operations of the Hudson's Bay were being extended. Twenty years after building Cumberland House, its first post in the interior, it had pushed down into Minnesota, across to the Missouri, out onto the plains of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and into the forests south of the barren lands. It had not made an attempt to establish itself in the Athabasca and Peace River country and had not crossed the Rockies. Nor did it ever cross them.

But, as Mackenzie wrote in his book in 1801, "they have been following the Canadians to their different establishments, while, on the contrary, there is not a solitary instance that the Canadians have followed them; and there are many trading posts which they have not yet attained." It was the Nor'Westers who led, who spread from Atlantic to Pacific, and it was the Nor'Westers who got the greater share of the fur. /

The Nor'Westers prospered, even during the factional fight with the X Y Company. They had expanded from a sixteen-share concern to one of a hundred shares. They had leased the King's Posts in the east and attained a virtual monopoly in the territory north

of the Great Lakes and the St. Lawrence. The partners and agents of the Company became wealthy and influential.

Unfortunately the business records of the North West Company have not survived, or have not come to light, and there is no means of comparing the relative profits or gross totals of trade or of determining the relative success of the rivals. So far as exploration, expansion and vigor are concerned, the record is clear. The Nor'Westers led always.

We have, however, certain indications. British custom house reports give us the importations of fur from Hudson Bay from 1772 until the union of the two companies. The relation of market value to value assessed for customs purposes is not known but the yearly totals do afford an excellent index of the Hudson's Bay Company's progress.

Fur imports, all amounts in pounds sterling, started at 8,005 in 1772, jumped suddenly to 13,440 in 1774 and then dropped to 7,412 in 1775. They then declined, touching 5,116 in 1779, and jumped to 15,017 in 1780 and almost as much the next year, but dropped below 8,000 until 1785.

This marks the first real effort of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" to meet the Nor'Westers and importations suddenly rose to 11,270 pounds. They climbed, with only two set-backs, to 18,492 in 1792, fell to 7,936 three years later, leaped the next year to 29,775, fell again, and touched 38,463 in 1800. After that the figures declined quickly, fluctuating from 15,000 to 20,000, with three drops to 8,000 or less, until union with the North West Company in 1821.

The Hudson's Bay paid no dividends from 1782 through 1786. Again in 1808 it failed to pay a dividend. It was forced to borrow £20,000 in 1802. In 1809 it again failed to pay dividends, though this was due to Napoleon's blockade and collapse of the fur market. We get one insight into the Company's gross business at this time. In a petition to the government it was stated that all fur received in 1806, 1807 and 1808 remained unsold and that it would have brought £150,000 if disposed of at the previous market price. We are able to get a direct comparison here. In a letter written by Sir Alexander Mackenzie to Roderick Mackenzie in the fall of 1806 is the statement that the returns for the year



were £130,000 to £140,000, "which must leave a very handsome profit." The Hudson's Bay Company told government its business totaled but little more than that in the three years beginning with 1806.

As opposed to fur imports from Hudson Bay, we have custom house figures for the same period from Canada. They are of no value for comparison of the two companies as Canadian imports included all the Great Lakes district and many of the middle western states until the close of the century.

These figures indicate, however, that the Hudson's Bay Company had a relatively small share in the fur business of North America. In 1784 the total from Canada, amounts in pounds sterling, was 72,000, 1790, 77,900, and in 1800, 144,300. For eight years it never fell below 51,000 and reached as high as 81,000. There were large decreases in 1809 and 1811 but thenceforth ranged from 23,000 to 47,000.

By no means do these figures represent North West Company business. About the time the company was formed it was estimated that a fourth of the furs imported from Montreal came from northwest of Lake Superior. In 1780 the annual value of the trade beyond Grand Portage, Montreal interests claimed, was £50,000. A customs officer placed the London market value of all furs shipped from Quebec in 1788 at £258,970. Another official estimate for 1801 placed the figure at £371,000. A report credited the northwest trade in 1790 with a value of £100,000. A writer in 1825 estimated North West Company profits for eighteen years, probably the final period, at £1,185,403. Fur sales of the Nor'-Westers in Canton, China, in 1815 are said to have brought more than £101,000.

Such figures, which are market values, must not be compared with the customs house figures for the Hudson's Bay Company. The North West sums are an indication of the huge profits made. The Hudson's Bay figures indicate only the annual fluctuations.

In 1808 the Hudson's Bay Company failed to pay a dividend and the next year was in such serious straits it asked the British government for help. The petition was a strange document, making absurd claims of civilizing and Christianizing the Indians and experimenting in agriculture. It failed to interest government.

The Company was desperate and in a new petition asked a loan of £60,000 from government and extension of time in paying duties on fur imported. The loan was refused but payment of duties extended one year.

The Hudson's Bay Company was now in a bad way. Its officers told government "we have pledged our credit till we feel, as honest men, that upon the present uncertainty we can pledge it no farther, and we throw ourselves upon your worships' wisdom to afford us that temporary assistance which we cannot ask at any other hands." Wars, blockades, inability to dispose of fur and the aggressive campaign of the Nor'Westers had combined to bring the "Gentlemen Adventurers" to their knees.

At this moment a wholly unforeseen event occurred. A factor entirely foreign to the fur trade and to the spirit of the American continent was thrust into the situation. Lord Selkirk, from the lowlands of Scotland, bought a controlling interest in the Hudson's Bay Company and began his preparations to establish a Scotch colony in the very heart of fur land. His scheme meant destruction for the Highland Nor'Westers and the clans rallied at once for the most bitter battle the north has known.

That battle ended in the practical ruin of both companies, and in their final union. It brought bloodshed. It flooded fur land with liquor. It seriously depleted large areas of pelt-bearing animals. It demoralized the natives. It cost a vast amount of money. And it has given to the entire Hudson's Bay-North West struggle a false coloring. But before considering the intrusion of a man who, with his ideas and methods, was wholly foreign to the thought and manner of both the fur trade and of the American continent, we must look further into the development of rivalry between the two great companies and the extension of activities across a continent.

## CHAPTER XXI

Accompanying that angle of the Hudson's Bay legend which prescribes immediate awakening of the chartered concern upon the arrival of the Montreal traders is the myth of bitter rivalry with the Nor'Westers. As we have seen, there was little commercial rivalry until ten or fifteen years after Cumberland House was established in 1774, and now in all first hand records we find scarcely a hint of bitterness. On the contrary, there are innumerable instances of friendly accord.

This peaceable attitude was tinged, on the part of the Nor'Westers, by something close to contempt. It is not definitely expressed in their journals but is read between the lines. Nor is it the contempt of a stronger opponent for a weaker but of efficiency for inefficiency, of accomplishment for inertia. "For reasons best known to themselves" was Alexander Mackenzie's comment on the failure of the Hudson's Bay Company to profit by its wonderful opportunities. The aggressive, vigorous Highlanders could not comprehend why a concern with every advantage on its side should make so sorry an effort.

But of bitterness there was little. As late as 1807, thirty-three years after Cumberland House was built, Daniel W. Harmon, a famous Nor'Wester from Vermont, made the following entry in his journal: "Two of the Hudson's Bay people arrived from Fort des Prairies, who were so obliging as to bring me letters from several gentlemen in that quarter. The greater part of the North West and Hudson's Bay people, live on amicable terms; and when one man can with propriety render a service to the other, it is done with cheerfulness." Harmon frequently mentions visits to Hudson's Bay posts.

Five years earlier, when the destructive competition between the North West and X Y Companies was becoming severe, Harmon wrote, "The North West Company look upon the X Y Company as encroachers upon their territories; and, I think, with

some reason, since the former company led the way into this savage country." Other Nor'Westers' journals hint at the bitterness of the X Y struggle, and sometimes display venom, but this tone is lacking in references to the Hudson's Bay Company.

Alexander Henry the elder recorded the first meeting between Hudson's Bay and Montreal men when he and the Frobishers stopped at Cumberland House in 1775 and found it under "command of a Mr. Cockings, by whom, though unwelcome guests, we were treated with much civility." In January, 1776, Joseph Frobisher and Henry snowshoed down to visit Cumberland House. "Mr. Cockings received us with much hospitality, making us partake of all he had, which, however, was but little. Himself and his men subsisted wholly on fish."

From those early days on, journals of Nor'Westers contain many references to Hudson's Bay men, and they are uniformly of a friendly tone. These entries tell even of coöperation between representatives of the two companies and an amiable division of trade.

This was particularly true of the vast prairie country where the various Sioux tribes were always a source of danger. In many places where the North West Company had built a post, the Hudson's Bay followed, and as a result of the attitude of the Indians the practice soon arose of joining the stockades, with a gate between, that forces might be massed in case of attack.

Alexander Henry the Younger left journals detailing events for nearly every day in fifteen years' service with the North West Company. Casual references, brief sentences and bare descriptions in the jotting down of routine affairs tell a significant story. Like other Nor'Westers, he refers often to "my neighbors," to the "H. B. Co. people" "I had my neighbor in to breakfast." As late as 1806 he wrote, "One of the H. B. boats off, taking forty pieces for me to the Forks."

Forty pieces was nearly two tons. The Hudson's Bay Company was transporting it for its "bitter enemy," the North West Company!

On the North Saskatchewan in 1808 Henry noted: "We had a dance which lasted until day break; our H. B. Co. neighbors were of the party, and all was mirth."

October, a year later: "This afternoon Mr. Bird (a Hudson's Bay man) arrived from York Factory, which he left last September in a light canoe. He brings us London papers so late as June 13 containing accounts of the battles between the French and the Austrians."

Another time: "I was visited by my H. B. Co. neighbors who were anxious to hear news of Europe."

All this, remember, more than forty years after the first Montreal traders invaded Rupert's Land and only eleven to fifteen years before the union of the two companies!

Minor legends concerning the Hudson's Bay Company are also exploded in a study of the voluminous journals left by the Nor'Westers. It is a common boast that the Hudson's Bay was remarkably successful in maintaining relations with savage tribes through five thousand miles of wilderness, and that the bloodshed and bitter warfare characteristic of expansion in the United States was absent. The Hudson's Bay did attain a remarkable control over the Indians after the union in 1821, but in that first spread of the traders across the plains, and for more than a quarter of a century afterward, there was constant danger, and several massacres occurred.

In such situations the Nor'Westers stand out in vivid contrast with Hudson's Bay men. The Highlander had been trained for generations to warfare and danger. His personal courage was his sole protection, and it carried him through countless situations of extreme hazard with astonishingly few fatalities. Alexander the Younger gives many instances of this, and of the action of the Hudson's Bay men.

In his description of the Rapid, or Fall, Indians, he said they "have repeatedly attempted to massacre us." He tells how, in 1793, they attacked old Fort Brule, where they pillaged the Hudson's Bay post and then attacked the North West establishment, but were unsuccessful because of the gallant conduct of one of the clerks. The next summer "they formally attacked the H. B. Co. on the South Branch (of the Saskatchewan), which they destroyed." The Indians killed all the Hudson's Bay people, except one man who hid in a cellar, pillaged the place and burned it, then turned upon the North West post near by. But the Nor'-

Westers beat them off, killed one of the principal chiefs and many others, "since which they have been more peaceable."

North West Company journals furnish almost the sole source of our information as to this period, but those journals are most convincing. Invariably they were written with no thought of publication. Each clerk was required to keep a daily record of events. Roderick Mackenzie, cousin of Sir Alexander, once sent a printed circular to all partners and clerks of the company in which he asked that descriptions of Indians, the country, flora and fauna and other matters of importance be written and forwarded to him. Much of this was done, though his scheme of a comprehensive publication embracing all fur land was never carried through.

The Nor'Westers wrote much. Most of them were men of education. Alexander and Roderick Mackenzie left valuable sketches of the fur trade. Nor'Westers sent many informative memorials to the British government. The Company even heralded the era of propaganda in its last years and published books intended to further its interests. Much of this, of course, must be carefully examined. It was written and printed with a purpose. But the journals of clerks and partners, letters written to Roderick Mackenzie and the many contributions to his literary scheme furnish us with a vast amount of unbiased and straightforward material upon which to base a true understanding of the rivalry between the fur land opponents.

The curt comments of Alexander Henry the Younger are especially valuable in reaching an understanding of men and events of the period. They give a picture of the courage, aggressiveness and trading ability of the North West men, and the lack of those qualities in many of the Hudson's Bay employees; of Indians, of dangers, of terrific toil; of the fundamental differences between the two companies and the reasons for the lack of success on the part of the Hudson's Bay.

Henry speaks of his own "men all off with the Indians for their skins. Our H. B. neighbors dare not stir from their fort, they were so much in dread of the Sioux." Once, at Fort Vermillion on the North Saskatchewan, when the Indians were hostile, is the bare statement, "The H. B. Co. people made pemmican inside their houses today." On his first journey up the Saskatchewan

in 1808 Henry encountered a Hudson's Bay party going in the same direction and camped for the night. "August 29. Before day we were on the water, leaving the H. B. Co. gentlemen still sound asleep."

Even in the common custom of dividing the trade of a district, the Nor'Westers often managed to come out ahead. In 1805 Henry recorded: "Oct. 6. We all arrived at Pembina River, where we found that the H. B. people were building, and about eighty Indians anxiously awaiting my arrival, in expectation of getting as much rum as usual; but they were mistaken. I immediately drew up an agreement with Mr. Miller (the Hudson's Bay trader); we divided our Indians, I taking care to keep the best hunters for myself, and settled matters so as to keep them (the Indians) from cheating us. I turned Tabashaw (an Ojibwa who had caused Henry much trouble) over to my neighbor and positively refused to have anything to do with him."

Yet Henry does not hesitate to record defeat. At Fort Augustus, the modern Edmonton, in 1809 he wrote, "The Bloods crossed over and began to trade—40 principal men at our fort, and 60 at the H. B."

Another keen observer who wrote of that period, and who was one of the most successful fur traders developed by the North West Company, was Duncan Cameron, in charge of the Nipigon district for many years. This was the very heart of the chartered land, embracing the territory from Lake Superior to the Bay and from Lake Winnipeg far to the east. Working from Lake Superior as a base, Cameron built posts all through this vast territory. He crossed Severn River, went one hundred leagues beyond and met traders from York Factory not far from that Hudson's Bay stronghold.

In Cameron's methods and understanding of Indian character we find the beginnings of that system of meeting opposition which, in later days of the Hudson's Bay's greatness, enabled it to maintain a practical monopoly even after legal monopoly ended. That method is still in use and has always characterized the successful fur trader. Ethically, it has never accorded with standards in settled communities, but the fur trade has of necessity developed its own code.

Cameron explains how, upon building Osnaburgh House near the headwaters of the Albany River in 1786, a post almost as far from salt water as Cumberland House, the Hudson's Bay Company was very successful for two years, after which, because of a lack of understanding of Indian character, it fell into disrepute with the natives. In 1796, he says, the older concern was again prospering, but in that year Cameron pushed through to the Severn and beyond, building posts as he went, and he was able to record later that when the North West, X Y and Hudson's Bay Companies were contending in the Nipigon district, the North West Company obtained three-quarters of the fur.

Cameron wrote a valuable description of the district and of the Indians but we have his journal for only one year. In this he details at length his methods of handling a band of Indians and so maneuvering affairs that he would get the produce of their hunt. While an isolated instance, it is indicative of the superiority of North West traders over their opponents, which was the real basis for the Nor'Westers' success. It is also another bit of evidence that the men and methods of the Montreal organization were the real source of the ultimate greatness of the Hudson's Bay Company.

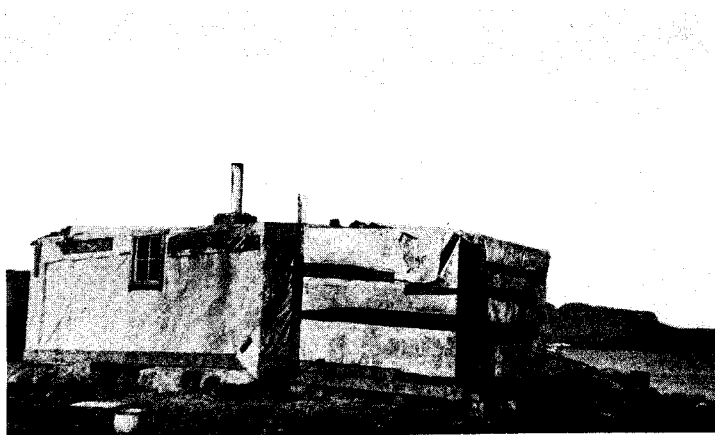
Historians have failed to understand that an Indian was not simply an Indian throughout fur land. Not only did tribes differ vastly in character, but topography and food supply determined the method of conducting the trade. On the vast prairies, for instance, the buffalo provided nearly everything an Indian needed. Food was so plentiful it was possible for large numbers of natives to live in a single community. These large tribes inevitably came in conflict with one another and warfare became the chief occupation and diversion. When traders went among such Indians that warlike spirit was a constant source of danger. The Hudson's Bay and North West Companies built their forts side by side for protection and rivalry perforce was not intense. Further, trading was largely done with a band as a whole and not with individual hunters.

In that vast forested district between the Great Lakes and Hudson Bay and from Churchill River south and east, an entirely different situation existed. Food was scarce, a condition which





Hudson's Bay official on tour of inspection.



Hudson's Bay dwelling house at Tree River, Coronation Gulf.  
Western Arctic.



scattered the natives over wide areas. Tribal government scarcely existed. Each family wintered alone. Trading, therefore, was with the individual and became a matter of scheming and plotting, of deception and trickery. Little or no danger of native hostility existed and a working agreement for mutual protection was not necessary.

Under such conditions, rivalry was more intense. Indians were given credit by both companies and did not hesitate to play one against the other, just as they do today, and as they always have done where there was competition. This led inevitably to resentment on the part of individual traders and, if a trader had spirit, to hostilities. The Highlander was never adverse to battle, or to "calling a man out," and it was in the forested area south of Hudson Bay that the few instances, prior to Lord Selkirk's appearance, of so-called North West Company outrages occurred.

Yet even in the severe competition in the Nipigon district we find a peaceable attitude common among the traders and it was not until 1806 that the first conflict there is recorded.

The stories of these few disorders have been used to color the entire half century during which the two companies opposed one another and are the basis of wholesale charges against the Nor'-Westers. They come, however, only from most partisan sources, from the Hudson's Bay Company, Lord Selkirk and Abbé George Dugas, a priest whose book on the fur trade is so bitter and so filled with prejudice it becomes immediately questionable as a source. Yet historians have quoted from it freely. Some repeat Dugas' tales, which he took from Selkirk and others, as facts without giving the source.

But as late as 1804, in the journal of Duncan Cameron, head of North West activities in Nipigon throughout the period of rivalry, we find the same evidences of friendliness so characteristic of the rivals on the great plains. When Cameron arrived at Osnaburgh in 1804, "We were very politely received by Mr. Goodwin, second factor of Fort Albany, whom we found in charge here." Later that year, when Cameron had built a new post near Severn River, "I invited my neighbor to breakfast and dine for the first time, and gave him good Madeira to drink at dinner, but I believe he would have preferred high wines, to which he is accustomed."

At Osnaburgh House that fall the more common method of winning fur is described by Cameron. Two Indians arrived and he was anxious to speak to them, but they were so closely watched by the Hudson's Bay people he was unable to do so.

"Having been invited by Mr. Goodwin to remain here all night on account of a violent storm and heavy showers of rain," Cameron wrote, "I managed in the evening to speak to one of them, and invited him to come next day to my tent with his brother.

"People unacquainted with the nature of the Indian trade will reckon my behavior very rude and say that I made very ungrateful returns for the polite hospitality I received. I admit that I am not wholly reconciled to the propriety of the conduct, although it is a very common custom in the country, which nothing but the nature of the trade can excuse."

But the Hudson's Bay man was playing the game, too, for in the next sentence Cameron wrote: "Mr. Goodwin hid some of our things so as to force us to remain till after breakfast, when we took our leave. Although our party was numerous"—ten men in all—"Mr. Goodwin treated us with the utmost liberality.

"When we left, the two Indians were lying dead drunk, after having been troublesome and insolent to the English all night. These people have the patience of Job and are real slaves to the Indians who come to their forts. We keep them at greater distance, which makes them more respectable to us than to the English."

Goodwin, of the Hudson's Bay, clearly got the better of that affair, but later Cameron saw the Indians and won over an entire family of a dozen or more hunters as a result.

Cameron emphasizes in his journal the difference in method of dealing with the Indians. Once he noted, "This Indian has been spoiled by the H. B. people at Osnaburgh Fort, where he may consider himself master. He had been invited to dine there last spring." Another time, "There are now eight Indians here, all drunk and very troublesome to my neighbor, who, I believe, is as drunk as themselves."

Again it may be stated that, after the union in 1821, the Nor'-Westers' methods prevailed. The success of the Hudson's Bay

Company in dealing with the Indians after union was never founded on the system of the old company.

Another instance of this difference in method is furnished by Alexander Henry the Younger. Under date of October 10, 1809, at Fort Vermillion on the North Saskatchewan, he wrote of two young Crees arriving at the Hudson's Bay fort. One left, and the other told that his companion had gone to steal Hudson's Bay Company horses. A North West Company employee caught the man and brought him in to Henry.

"The Assiniboines did all in their power to release the prisoner," Henry recorded, "and even made threats; but to no purpose. Mr. Longmore (the Hudson's Bay's chief officer) was intoxicated, and insisted upon killing the Indian; he came over, armed capapee, and I had some trouble to prevent murder. Questioned in evidence, he gave us full and satisfactory information regarding the notorious character of the prisoner, as a horsethief and murderer. I brought in the prisoner before his companion and detailed to both what had been told us regarding him; his defense was lame and his excuses without foundation. Everything confirmed what we had heard about him. To allow him to escape unpunished, after such proof, would be imprudent, and encourage others to similar crimes. He was secured for the night.

"October 11th. At nine o'clock he was conducted down to the river below the H. B. house, and shot by a discharge of fifteen guns—much against my inclination, I must confess. I had various reasons for not wishing him to be executed, corporal punishment being all I desired; but my neighbor insisted upon killing him."

This was for horse stealing. We have another instance of such an execution on the part of Nor'Westers in the long-lost journals of Peter Fidler, some of which were uncovered in York Factory in 1912 by J. B. Tyrrell of the Canadian Geological Survey. Fidler, one of the most energetic traders for the Hudson's Bay before union of the two companies, and one of its two surveyors of any consequence, describes the killing of two Indians accused of the murder of a North West partner. One was shot in trying to escape, the other was hung.

Alexander Henry the Younger made the following note on "my neighbor" who insisted upon the execution of a horsethief on

the Saskatchewan: "Mr. Longmore embarked with his family, determined to leave the country and retire to enjoy the fruits of his labors; he is now worth about 1,800 pounds, after nearly 40 years' service in the H. B. Co."

Robert Longmore entered the Hudson's Bay service at the time when, in its efforts to buy loyalty and industry, the Company increased salaries and paid a bonus on fur purchased. Scattered through the journals and writings of North West men we find many references to this, and to its effects on the fur trade. It gives us, too, a potent reason for the failure of the Hudson's Bay Company to maintain the pace of its more aggressive rivals. Duncan Cameron, at Nipigon, had this to say about it:

"Another circumstance which will tend to injure the trade very much, so long as we have the Hudson's Bay Company against us, is the premium they allow every factor or master on whatever number of skins they obtain. These people do not care at what price they buy or whether their employers gain by them, so long as they have their premium, which sets them in opposition to one another almost as much as they are to us. The honorable Hudson's Bay Company proprietors very little knew their own interest when they first allowed this interest to their 'Officers,' as they call them, as it certainly had not the desired effect, for, if it added some to their exertions, it led in a great degree to the squandering of their goods, as they are in general both needy and selfish."

Alexander Mackenzie spoke of this practice, and its effect, in his sketch of the fur trade. It is shown even in customs house figures. Exportation of goods from England to Hudson Bay for the ten years beginning with 1791 averaged more than £33,000 annually, while for an equal period after union of the two companies, beginning in 1822, the average for the entire trade was slightly less. These figures show a sudden and large increase in the last decade of the century and this was partly due, of course, to the Hudson's Bay Company's belated effort to expand trade. But the lavish use of trade goods bears out the comments of Nor'Westers that the older concern's employees wasted commodities in attempting to gain favor with the Indians and to increase their own incomes. In a succeeding chapter we will give

details of this and show how Hudson's Bay men fought among themselves for the Indians' fur at a time when the Nor'Westers were making big gains.

Fundamentally, there was a vast difference between the two companies. One was a partnership, conducted on the spot by the owners and by clerks assured of participation if they proved themselves. Not only did such a system insure vigor and enterprise but it brought economy in operation. Owners and employees were Scotch.

The other concern was owned and controlled in distant London by men who had no first-hand knowledge of the fur trade and could not keep pace with its rapid development. Its executives in the field were on salary and received a bonus on all skins purchased. The result was inevitable. Skins purchased meant money in the trader's pocket. The purchase price was not his concern unless he were a particularly honest man.

The Hudson's Bay Company was further handicapped by the type of officer in charge of its operations. Edward Umfreville has left a picture of those early autocrats on the Bay. He entered the service of the Company as a clerk in 1771 and we have already quoted his opinion of the governor who surrendered York Factory to La Perouse in 1782. Umfreville was taken prisoner by the French and upon his release went to Quebec, where he entered the service of the North West Company in 1784, serving four years beyond Lake Superior. He then returned to England and wrote a book which has been much quoted by historians. While his prejudice against the Hudson's Bay is most evident, many of his statements have been corroborated.

He accused governors on the Bay of abusing Indians, "causing them frequently to be beat and mal-treated, although they have come some hundreds of miles to barter their skins. . . . This is one of the reasons why the trade of York Factory has so materially declined of late years; the decrease has chiefly arisen from the cruel treatment the Indians generally receive from the Factors."

Humphrey Marten was governor of York Factory at this time and when young David Thompson went there in 1785 Marten had been in the service for twenty-four years. He had many native

wives and half-breed children and is pictured as a cruel tyrant. He is the man who surrendered York to La Perouse without resistance in 1782.

Umfreville comments: "Some (governors) have I known who despised servility and unworthy deeds; but this was only for a time, and while young in their stations. A continual course of power and uncontrolled command has made them absolute, and impatient to the asperity of contradiction."

This critic of the Hudson's Bay Company evidently tried to be just. "I am happy to have it in my power to mention one particular in which they merit commendation; and this is the moderate price they fix on some European commodities, which they sell to their servants. It however must be owned, that the Hudson's Bay traders have ingratiated themselves more into the esteem and confidence of the natives than the Canadians. The advantage of trade is evidently on their side; their men, whose honesty is incorruptible, being more to be depended upon . . . Another great advantage in their favor is that the principal articles of their trading goods are of a superior quality to those imported from Canada."

Umfreville seems to contradict himself here. The integrity of which he speaks is that of the Orkney Islanders, however, men employed as laborers and to carry small quantities of trade goods among the Indians. He is comparing them with the French Canadian voyageurs, whom he disliked, and does not refer to executives in the trade. Yet historians have applied that comparison to the Highland fur chiefs.

The incredulity of the Nor'Westers in regarding the inertia of the older concern is shown when Umfreville wrote: "Another reason why the Company's trade is so very insignificant, is a total want of spirit in themselves, to push it on with that vigor the importance of the contest deserves. The merchants from Canada have been heard to acknowledge, that were the Hudson's Bay Company to prosecute their inland trade in a spirited manner, they must soon be obliged to give up all thoughts of penetrating into the country; as from the vicinity of the Company's factories to the inland parts, they can afford to undersell them in every branch."



That incredulity expressed by the Nor'Westers persists today if one considers the situation dispassionately, and yet it has never been touched upon by historians. They were blinded by the Hudson's Bay legend. They never saw that the Nor'Westers operated always under a handicap of transporting all goods sold and all fur purchased for two thousand miles before they attained an equal footing with the Hudson's Bay Company, and that, despite this handicap, they were able to gain a swift ascendancy and to maintain it.

It must be remembered that Umfreville wrote before the older concern made any serious effort to resist the encroachments of the Montreal men. He has been quoted often, and always without consideration of the date of writing. This is true of all the authorities used in descriptions of the half century of rivalry between the two companies. No one seems to have considered that conditions changed rapidly, or even that they varied in different parts of fur land. It is not unusual to find a perfectly true statement applied to a situation that existed after the man who made the statement had died or had abandoned the fur trade.

We have attempted in this and the preceding chapter to unscramble the great mass of legend and accepted statement and to trace the development of rivalry through a half century. We have no intention of whitewashing the North West Company but we have tried to show that charges made against the first traders who went beyond Lake Superior should not be carried over and used against the strong, energetic men who finally achieved success; we have tried to show that whatever of romance and adventure and achievement is found in the fur trade was contributed by the daring and vigorous Highlanders and not by the "Gentlemen Adventurers"; we have sought to let the reader understand whence sprang the power and achievement and beautiful loyalty ultimately attained by the Hudson's Bay Company.

## CHAPTER XXII

Still another Hudson's Bay legend falls by the wayside when we examine more closely the rivalry with the Nor'Westers. It is that of a jealous and unalterable insistence upon the terms of the Company's monopoly, of a stern enforcement of its right to exclusive trade within the chartered lands.

That jealous insistence existed, but it was applied only to its own sea captains and chief officers, and even to shareholders. The fear was of an illicit trade within the Company's own ranks. We fail to find the Company taking steps to oust others who traded within the chartered lands. We even find it evading that issue.

In the final days of the struggle with the Nor'Westers Lord Selkirk sought to stop North West Company trade by force, but his action was scarcely more than a reprisal, or part of his determined effort to defeat his rivals.

Upon the fall of the Stuarts and the loss of royal backing, the early Company asked Parliament to affirm its charter, which Parliament did in 1690, but only for seven years. When the Dobbs enquiry was concluded in 1749 the Parliamentary committee pronounced the charter perfectly valid. The question of its validity was not again raised by the Company until 1804, and then it only asked for an opinion by a firm of solicitors.

We might understand how the Company would hesitate to insist upon its rights in the case of the French, but failure to take any action against the Montreal traders is inexplicable, unless the Hudson's Bay was fearful of a test in the courts. In the beginning the Montreal men did not seem to have given the charter a thought. Later they laid claim to the vast interior on the grounds that they were successors to the French, who had first carried the trade to that district.

The Hudson's Bay Company had an officer or two in the field who believed in the charter, or at least tried to impress its

validity upon the Nor'Westers, but this was evidently a matter of individual enterprise and by no means a Company policy. We have one instance of it in a letter from Alexander Mackenzie to his cousin Roderick written in the fall of 1787. Evidently he had met some Hudson's Bay people on his way to Athabasca. "The English are badly inclined. They told me that if I should send any men to the place where *La Grosse Tête* (an Indian) had passed the winter, M. Thomason would go himself at the head of a party, seize the goods, take the men prisoners, and send all to Hudson Bay, adding, if any resistance was offered, that no mercy would be shown. But Mr. Thomason was not then aware of the coalition of the two companies (the North West and the Gregory-McLeod concern) and I did not think proper to tell him of it."

In the same letter Mackenzie tells of the loss of a man to the Hudson's Bay, which "is determined to hire as many of our men as they can."

This letter is very revealing, and yet it has never been quoted. Alexander Mackenzie was then twenty-three years old. He had just been placed in charge of the Athabasca department for the united North West Company. He met "Thomason"—William Tomison is the correct name, "That turbulent old Tomison" as Henry the Younger referred to him twenty-two years later—and evidently listened to the Englishman's bluster and threats without comment, knowing the Hudson's Bay man was only bluffing because he believed Mackenzie was still the representative of the small Gregory-McLeod company. When such shrewd, confident and unshakable men were heading North West affairs, we can better understand how they outdistanced their cumbersome and unimaginative rivals. The young Mackenzie must have enjoyed that meeting. "I did not think proper to tell him of it." While further reference to the incident has not come to light, we can feel certain that the trader who later was to cross to the Pacific did not neglect to send men and goods to the place where *La Grosse Tête* wintered.

But if the Nor'Westers were contemptuous of chartered rights of the Hudson's Bay Company, they were by no means adverse to asking legal monopoly from the government for themselves, or even to making actual monopoly effective by driving out rivals.

By their energy and, at times, ruthlessness, they eliminated practically all traders in what is now Canada with the exception of the Hudson's Bay Company, and as they pressed on into the Mackenzie basin and across the Rocky Mountains, opening new territory, they became far more jealous of rights attained by energetic action than was the Hudson's Bay of its royal privileges.

The North West Company is known as a wonderfully efficient organization of fur traders but historians have overlooked the keen business ability of its Montreal agents and their tireless efforts to insure the fruits of activities in the field. As was pointed out earlier, they introduced the big business idea on this continent. They built up an organization richer, greater and more powerful than any in America. Their trade was by far the largest single item of commerce in Canada and they quickly developed that union of business and politics which has been characteristic of America ever since.

Only with the British government itself did the Nor'Westers fail, a fact probably due more to London's lack of interest in, and failure to appreciate the possibilities of, the Western World. Had Nor'Wester schemes and suggestions prevailed, the boundaries of the United States would be vastly different than they are today.

Yet nothing discouraged the Nor'Westers, and a factor which has been completely overlooked in accounts of the long years of competition with the Hudson's Bay Company is the aggressive, ceaseless and far-sighted campaign waged by the agents in Montreal, a campaign that matched the conduct of the trade itself by the "wintering partners." This contest with the Hudson's Bay was not unlike one between a skilled and tireless boxer and a huge, cumbersome opponent who scarcely becomes aware of what is going on. The audacity and youthful, vigorous action of the Scotchmen affords a refreshing picture of those times.

As early as 1785, the North West Company, through representatives in London, asked for a monopoly of trade for ten years from Hudson Bay to the Pacific in return for exploration promised in that territory between 55 and 65 degrees north latitude. Peter Pond and the Frobishers were the principal proponents of

this scheme, but evidently the government let the matter die a slow death.

Edward Umfreville, in his book published in 1789, suggested a union of the two companies. Alexander Mackenzie outlined the advantages of this in his own book in 1801, and that same year he urged his ideas upon the British government, as we have seen. Mackenzie proposed a variety of plans for the extension of the fur trade and British influence, none of which received official sanction, but that by no means discouraged the Nor'Westers. They immediately put into effect a delightfully audacious scheme which had as its foundation an effort to settle once and for all the legality of the Hudson's Bay Company's charter.

Simon McTavish, high-tension leader of the North West Company, was father of this movement. In 1803 a ship was sent into Hudson Bay itself in open defiance of the charter and at the same time an overland expedition was dispatched by way of Lakes St. John and Mistassini to coöperate with it.

Two posts were built by the Nor'Westers, one on Charlton Island in James Bay, and the other close beside Moose Factory, while a third was established on Lake Mistassini, which drains into Hudson Bay through Rupert's River, on which Fort Charles was built in 1668. Thus the North West Company carried the struggle into the very heart of the sacred land.

It was a direct slap in the face of the Hudson's Bay Company, a bit of daring effrontery that must have greatly shocked the "Gentlemen Adventurers" in London. The one reference to the outcome of the incident in recorded history is Masson's statement that the posts were not successful financially and were soon abandoned, but two letters in Hudson's Bay archives suggest another reason for the North West action. One of these letters, from Duncan McGillivray, asks that the Hudson's Bay sue him for invasion of the chartered lands.

But the Hudson's Bay did not do so. It sought legal advice and the opinion given was that, while the charter was valid and the Nor'Westers had trespassed, no criminal action had been committed and aid of English courts could not be sought. Then the Hudson's Bay Company took a typical step. As it had once sued a fort governor for surrendering to the French, it now brought

suit against Captain John Richards, a ship master in its employ who had resigned to take command of the North West vessel that entered the Bay.

The second letter in Hudson's Bay archives was written by Duncan McGillivray in 1804 and completes our picture of what lay behind McTavish's plan. McGillivray, after failing to be sued, suggested to the "Gentlemen Adventurers" that they keep the Bay and let the North West Company have the interior.

Nor was this all. The North West Company opened up the country beyond the Rocky Mountains and asked the British government to give it a monopoly in that region. Sir Alexander Mackenzie was active in this and suggested a line of posts from Montreal to the Pacific. The whole matter was linked with international complications, Lewis and Clark having reached the mouth of the Columbia, and it was pointed out that the North West Company was best able to extend and maintain British possession. Coupled with this was a demand that the Hudson's Bay Company give an irrevocable right to the Nor'Westers for transit of goods through Hudson Bay.

Still another matter was connected with this project, the monopoly of trade held in the Pacific by the East India Company, which alone had the legal right to send British ships into that ocean, and a license from that old chartered concern was asked. Speed was urged by the Nor'Westers because of possible American possession along the Pacific coast, but the government procrastinated until 1812 and the project probably died as a result of war with the United States.

Meanwhile the North West Company tried other schemes. In 1810 it came out boldly with a formal proposition that the trade be divided with the Hudson's Bay Company. The chartered land was to be split up, while the Mackenzie basin and the western side of the Rocky Mountains were to remain in North West hands. Correspondence on this question was conducted between the two companies for a year or more, the Hudson's Bay refusing to abandon any chartered territory or to be debarred from the west or north. The question was revived in 1815 with new suggestions by the Nor'Westers, such as division on the basis of existing trade and joint participation. But Lord Selkirk con-

trolled the Hudson's Bay at that time and nothing came of the negotiations.

Denied government help, the North West Company conducted its own negotiations and reached an agreement with the East India Company whereby it could send its own ships to the Pacific coast. Thence they sailed to China and opened new and rich markets.

Nor were the Montreal men content only with the trade in British possessions. In 1804 the North West Company had posts in Michigan, Wisconsin and Minnesota, and in 1806 the Michillimackinac Company was formed to conduct the trade on the American side of the boundary. Americans were becoming incensed by the spread of British influence among Indians in its own territory. The new concern was patterned after the North West Company and its partners were mostly Nor'Westers. The intent was to organize the trade throughout the upper Mississippi Valley.

But the astute Montreal men were alive to a growing tension between England and the United States and soon saw their enterprise would fail. John Jacob Astor was competing with them below the Great Lakes and in 1809 he organized the American Fur Company. Astor had purchased much fur from the Nor'Westers and they now went to him with a plan to dissolve their own company and merge with the American concern in a new organization to be known as the South West Company.

This was done, Astor owning half the stock and obtaining the privilege of buying the remainder in three years. The story of this operation is told with Astor as the prime mover but it is to be noted that the War of 1812 began soon and that, as a result of it, the South West Company was dissolved. The Highlanders had not been caught napping, and again they were pioneers in the big business custom of evading national boundaries by reorganization and combination. They escaped, too, before war would have robbed them of their holdings.

As a result of the War of 1812, the tireless and adroit Nor'Westers made a new assault on their rivals. Their own communications with the far west and north were imperiled by American activities on the border and they went directly to the British

government with a request that the validity of the Hudson's Bay charter be examined and that the older Company be compelled to give them permission to take goods through Hudson Bay. The request was accompanied by a direct attack upon the ancient concern with the statement that its stock in twenty years had dropped from 250 to fifty per cent, that no dividends had been paid for seven years and that shareholders had not received any information of the Company's affairs from the Governor and Committee. The Hudson's Bay Company granted the request for transport of supplies through the Bay, but on prohibitive terms.

A daring project that would have altered the entire history of the fur trade, had it been carried through, was launched by the North West Company in 1804, but the public did not learn of it for more than half a century. Testifying before the Parliamentary Committee in London in 1857, Edward Ellice, an old Nor'Wester, the man perhaps most instrumental in bringing about the union of 1821 and for long afterward a power in Hudson's Bay affairs, made the statement that in 1804 he and his North West Company associates had attempted to buy the Hudson's Bay outright. Ellice said he offered to Sir Richard Neave, governor of the Company, £103,000 in Navy five per cent bonds for the entire capital stock. He testified "that transaction only was not carried into effect because part of the stock was found to be the property of infants, and other persons incapable of giving title, or making transfer, and which would have made it necessary for the parties to go to the court of chancery for powers, and I did not at that time want that this transaction should be published."

This testimony is taken from the printed records of Parliament, has been available and undoubtedly has been read by every writer dealing with the story of the Hudson's Bay Company. But it has remained buried in legislative records despite its significance in our story. The Hudson's Bay Company, which has so often been described as "aroused to battle" and "fighting tooth and nail" with its opponents, which legend has taught us to believe resented bitterly the intrusion of the Nor'Westers and brought its vast might to the effort of crushing intruders, was willing to sell out for a sum less than the capital stock. And that



capitalization was not a modern expression of the Company's assets or value but had remained unchanged since 1720, although there had been considerable recent expansion. The only possible inference is that the Hudson's Bay Company was glad of an opportunity to quit the struggle before it had lost everything.

A few years later, when the Hudson's Bay Company was on the verge of bankruptcy, the Nor'Westers failed to take advantage of an opportunity to purchase control of the rival organization for a much smaller sum. Sir Alexander Mackenzie tells of it in a letter written in 1812. He had purchased some stock, as had other Nor'Westers, to gain entrance to a shareholders' meeting of the Hudson's Bay Company, and he had also been interested with Selkirk in the latter's initial purchases. His own purchases were for the North West Company but, because of the absence of one of the McGillivrays, the opportunity to buy control was lost.

Selkirk got the stock instead, "and if he persists in his present scheme, it will be the dearest he ever made," Sir Alexander wrote. "He will put the North West Company to a greater expense than you seem to apprehend, and had the Company sacrificed 20,000 pounds which might have secured a preponderance of stock in the Hudson's Bay Co., it would have been money well spent."

Alexander Mackenzie is known as an explorer, but no man in the fur trade had a better understanding of conditions and trends, or a keener business mind. All his statements and predictions, some made many years before events, proved astonishingly accurate. He foresaw what Selkirk's entrance into the situation would mean. The Nor'Westers probably believed they had the battle won, as indeed they had. The Hudson's Bay Company was on the verge of bankruptcy. But Selkirk, with fresh money and new methods, carried on the struggle until both companies were on the verge of ruin.

## CHAPTER XXIII

There are other factors in the development of the British American fur trade that must be taken up before we can examine Lord Selkirk's entrance into the situation. In previous chapters we have shown how the Nor'Westers led in the initial expansion, how they explored and carried the trade as they went, how their financial success mounted while the Hudson's Bay Company approached bankruptcy, and how their leaders maintained a rapid-fire attack through business and political channels.

But meanwhile the fur trade had been spreading and exploration had been pushed forward. In this respect the North West Company was first, but it did not lead, for the simple reason that the Hudson's Bay Company did not follow. The vast and rich valleys of the Peace and the Mackenzie remained in the Nor'Westers' possession from date of discovery, while the Montreal men pushed on across the Rockies to find a beaver country which never saw a Hudson's Bay post until after the union in 1821.

The policy of the Hudson's Bay Company which prevailed in the days of Radisson, of Kelsey and of Hendry was continued. We have spoken of the agitation of Alexander Dalrymple in 1790 to press exploration in the interior of the continent. Dalrymple had tried this before, and as a result the Hudson's Bay agreed to comply with the demand. It did so in a thoroughly characteristic manner by sending to the Bay in 1785 a boy, George Charles, fifteen years old. The lad was given three days' instruction in the use of a sextant and then told to explore the great American continent. Of course, he did not even start.

Dalrymple's insistence in 1790 resulted in a request from the Colonial Office that the Hudson's Bay Company accomplish something in the way of exploration, especially in the matter of settling the position of Lake Athabasca. "The Old Worthies" could not ignore this and a competent astronomer, Philip Turnor, was assigned to the work.

Turnor was competent but again the Hudson's Bay Company acted characteristically. In the first place, it had no establishment in the Athabasca region and no Hudson's Bay man had ever been there. It started Turnor into the wilderness accompanied by a clerk, Malcolm Ross, and a few Indians, and let him shift for himself. Turnor was able to make a good survey solely because of the assistance of the North West Company. We have one of Alexander Mackenzie's many informing letters to Roderick, who was then at Fort Chipewyan.

"I met Mr. Turnor here this morning," Mackenzie wrote while on his way to Grand Portage on June 1, 1791. "I find the intention of the expedition is discoveries only. I also find the party ill prepared for the undertaking. Mr. Ross wishes to obtain storage from you for some baggage, should the expedition proceed further than your place, where, they say, they intend to pass the winter. They have several Indians with them who owe credits to Mr. Small."

The picture is complete. Mackenzie, recently returned from the mouth of the Mackenzie River and on his way to England to perfect his astronomical knowledge before a fresh attempt to find the Pacific, is first of all a Nor'Wester. He made certain Turnor and Ross did not contemplate extension of Hudson's Bay trade. He saw that Turnor, with poor equipment, would never be a rival in exploration, and he did not fail to note that some of the Hudson's Bay Indians were indebted to the North West Company for goods. Knowing Mackenzie as we now do, we can feel certain that Roderick collected those debts.

Farther on toward Lake Superior, Alexander Mackenzie wrote Roderick again. "Give my compliments to Mr. Turnor, the English astronomer, and tell him I am sorry I cannot have the pleasure of his company this winter."

Turnor completed his task and returned to the Bay, and the following year went to England, where he soon afterward dropped out of sight. Historians speak of him as "the English astronomer," getting the phrase from Mackenzie, and assume that he was sent from England expressly for the Athabasca survey. Yet Turnor entered the Hudson's Bay service about the time Hearne completed his Coppermine journey and did much surveying for the

Company about the Bay. He surveyed two routes from York Factory to the Saskatchewan, supposedly at the time Hearne established Cumberland House.

David Thompson says Turnor surveyed to Hudson House up the Saskatchewan in 1776 but Thompson wrote long afterward from hearsay and his statements are not clear. Later Turnor was on the Severn and Moose Rivers and surveyed to Lake Abitibi and his work was included in Arrowsmith's maps. But for a long time he was kept at trading posts near the Bay and not permitted to do any exploring or surveying.

In 1789 Turnor was at Cumberland House, and stationed there were two youths, Peter Fidler and David Thompson, whom he taught the principles of geography and surveying. Fidler became one of the few energetic traders in the Hudson's Bay service and was the first to carry the struggle into the Athabasca country. These three men, Turnor, Fidler and Thompson, properly encouraged, could have carried Hudson's Bay trade to the Pacific and the Arctic. As the "Gentlemen Adventurers" were fortunate to have had Radisson, and would not use him, they had also these three. If we study the story of Thompson we will not only understand why they were not used but gain a clearer understanding of the Hudson's Bay Company in this period.

David Thompson was born in 1770 in London, of Welch parents—Ap Thomas was the family name—and when seven years old was placed in the Grey Coat School as a charity pupil. Thompson wrote later that for many years the Hudson's Bay Company obtained from this school boys who had a mathematical education and used them, "to save expenses," in its fur posts as keepers of accounts.

In 1783 the Hudson's Bay asked the school for four boys trained in navigation. Only two were available. One, learning his fate, ran away and was never heard of again. Thompson was the other and in 1784 the school paid the Hudson's Bay Company five pounds to take the boy as an apprentice for seven years. In this connection it is interesting to learn that George Charles, sent to the Bay the following year when Dalrymple urged the necessity of more geographical knowledge, was apprenticed in a

like manner, with the exception that, as the school records show, the Hudson's Bay was paid an additional four pounds "in lieu of instruments."

The fourteen-year-old Thompson boy was sent to Fort Churchill, then in command of Samuel Hearne. The explorer had become a follower of Voltaire and scandalized the lad, who had been given a careful Christian training. The boy was not given any tasks and complained that he would forget how to write. Hearne let him copy part of his book, as yet unpublished.

In 1785 Thompson was sent on foot to York Factory where he kept accounts under Humphrey Marten, the despotic governor. That summer he was astonished to see George Charles disembark, for when the two were in school together young Charles had planned to learn a trade. Thompson expressed his surprise and Charles explained how he had spent three days in preparation for his task as surveyor and astronomer and was then sent to the Bay to determine the position of Lake Athabasca. "This trick prevented the Colonial Office from obtaining the desired information for five years," Thompson wrote later.

When he was sixteen, Thompson was sent up the Saskatchewan with Robert Longmore, of whom we have caught a glimpse through Alexander Henry the Younger. This was in 1786 and, if the Hudson's Bay had established posts there earlier, they had been abandoned long before. Now Manchester House was built and the second winter young Thompson was sent in command of six men to trade with the Piegiens near the present Calgary. In 1789 he was in Cumberland House with Fidler and Turnor.

We now reach an enlightening period in Thompson's career. The youth wanted to explore, to put his new-found knowledge of astronomy to use. Turnor went to Athabasca on the old North West Company trail. Thompson learned from the Indians of a possible route by way of the Churchill River and Reindeer and Wollaston Lakes and wanted to find and survey it. But for several years his superior kept him busy operating small posts in the "muskrat country," that vast territory between Lake Winnipeg and the Bay and south of the Churchill River.

The situation revealed by Thompson's story and by letters in

Hudson's Bay archives is astounding, and the most astounding feature of it is that it continued year after year. To understand it, we should review affairs in that period.

Joseph Colen was a clerk until Governor Marten left York Factory in 1786, when Colen succeeded him as chief. Hearne went home from Churchill in 1787. "That turbulent old Tomison" was "chief inland," being in command at Cumberland House, and Robert Longmore, who retired in 1810 with £1,800 after nearly forty years' service, was his second.

As a century earlier, each governor of a principal fort was answerable only to London. Each now received in addition to salary a bonus on fur shipped. The coalition of Montreal traders in 1787 had released a united North West movement. The battle for fur was on, not the bitter, sanguinary struggle of thirty years later but a driving effort on the part of the vigorous Montreal organization to get every pelt in sight.

These Nor'Westers spread all through the great swamp and forest area from the barren grounds south and east to the Great Lakes and the present boundary of Quebec. This was the most sacred part of Rupert's Land, long the exclusive territory of the Hudson's Bay. It was nearly three thousand miles by canoe from Montreal, but it bordered on the Bay and was easily accessible from Churchill, York, Severn and Albany. Historians assure us that the "Gentlemen Adventurers" had already begun to fight.

Yet what had happened? In 1794 Joseph Colen, chief at York, wrote to London that Robert Thompson and McKay, Nor'-Westers, were established north of Cumberland House and their "success of late years in collecting furs has been great." In 1794 London wrote to York expressing the hope that George Charles, the boy "astronomer," who had been sent up the Churchill River, would "restore a considerable part of the long-lost trade to Churchill."

By 1792 the North West Company had won almost the entire trade of this district. In that year Turnor returned from surveying Lake Athabasca and immediately London began urging Colen to establish posts there. It was unusually rich in fur, and formerly its people had made the long journey to Churchill. Colen had two ambitious young men in Thompson and in Malcolm

Ross, who had gone to Athabasca with Turnor. Both were eager to push the trade to Athabasca. But Colen sent them into the muskrat country north of Cumberland House to build small posts and combat the North West Company *and Hudson's Bay traders from Churchill*.

That situation continued for several years. London repeatedly urged that some one be sent to Athabasca. It wrote approval of young Thompson's desire to do so. But year after year Colen continued to send his traders into the Nelson-Churchill country to win fur from fellow Hudson's Bay men sent out from Fort Churchill.

In 1793 David Thompson, twenty-three years old, made an effort to reach Lake Athabasca without help from Colen, but Indian canoemen he had engaged did not appear and he was forced to abandon the project. He wintered again in the muskrat country and in 1794 Colen wrote London that efforts to reach Athabasca had failed. He placed all the blame on Tomison at Cumberland House. "Indeed we find the business involved in mystery, and as are many other transactions inland." But still Colen made no effort to extend trade. Malcolm Ross was so disgusted he decided to quit the service and return to England but Thompson induced him to remain. Both were sent back to the muskrat country to win fur from the Nor'Westers and Hudson's Bay men alike.

In 1795 London wrote Colen: "We observe that Mr. P. Fidler has been kept at the Factory for two seasons past, but for the future we direct him to proceed inland on discoveries." Fidler was the first to establish a Hudson's Bay post in the Athabasca country, but not until 1802. Even then he was soon forced to leave. Meanwhile, despite London's letters, Colen sent Ross and Thompson to Churchill River to carry on the fight with Hudson's Bay men as well as Nor'Westers.

We have a definite example of this competition within the Company's ranks during Thompson's stay at Duck Portage on the Churchill River in the winter of 1795-1796. Thompson, it is to be remembered, was sent into this district behind Fort Churchill by Colen of York Factory. During the fall George Charles, now a Fort Churchill trader, arrived from down river. He went on far-

*ther, but he left three men to build a house beside Thompson's and compete for the Indian trade that winter.*

This is the Hudson's Bay Company that had been aroused to fight upon the coming of the first Montreal traders more than a quarter of a century earlier. This is the mighty fur trading organization which, historians would have us believe, was served by devoted and unswerving employees in a struggle with unscrupulous ruffians from Montreal.

Not all its men were interested in competing with one another, however. Young Thompson still wanted to find a new route to Lake Athabasca and see the trade extended into the stronghold of the Nor'Westers, that rich territory in which no Hudson's Bay man had ever bought a beaver skin. In the spring of 1796 he decided that he would make the attempt regardless of orders or assistance from Colen.

He was absolutely without equipment, but that did not stop him. He could get only two young Indians who, though they had hunted two winters in the country he wished to explore, had never seen it in summer. They had no canoe and were forced to find materials and make one. Their equipment consisted of one fowling piece, forty balls, five pounds each of powder and shot, three flints, one small ax, one small tent and a few trifles, beads and awls, for presents and trade. They had a thirty-fathom fishnet.

Thus equipped, Thompson went upriver to Reindeer Lake, across to Wollaston Lake and thence through a chain of lakes and a river to the west end of Lake Athabasca, where he found evidences of Turnor's presence five years earlier. On his return he suffered many hardships and privations. He believed once he would starve to death and was about to write a farewell note when two tents of Chipewyan Indians were encountered.

On his way back he built a post on Reindeer Lake and that fall Malcolm Ross brought instructions from Colen. "By a letter from him I was informed that however extensive the countries yet unknown yet he could not sanction any further surveys."

Forty-one years earlier, Anthony Hendry was laughed out of the Hudson's Bay service because he had told of Indians on horseback. The Hudson's Bay had not changed, despite the com-



ing of the Nor'Westers and the loss of its trade. Young Malcolm Ross was disgusted and ready to quit because a bickering governor would not let him carry the trade to Athabasca. Now David Thompson, pushing on without orders or encouragement, was rewarded with a command to discontinue such activities.

Before he died, and as a Nor'Wester, Thompson had surveyed more land routes in unknown country than any other man has ever done. A few years ago his maps of some parts of Canada still represented, after more than a century, the only surveys made. He opened up the Columbia River basin and conducted the trade there for the North West Company. Before he retired he had traveled 50,000 miles, surveying and resurveying as he went. He mapped from Sault Ste. Marie to the mouth of the Columbia River and from the Missouri River to Peace River and Lake Athabasca. His achievements in this respect are unmatched.

The Hudson's Bay might have profited by David Thompson's stupendous industry and his complete loyalty. But Joseph Colen was too busy trying to get fur from Tomison at Cumberland House and from the governor of Fort Churchill to be bothered by discoveries or surveying or trade extension. Hudson's Bay men were fighting among themselves to increase their premiums. That was the situation at the close of the eighteenth century, long after the time when, we are assured, the Hudson's Bay Company had begun to fight. That was the situation in the Company one hundred and twenty-seven years after it received its charter.

The point has been made repeatedly that the Governor and Committee in London urged exploration and trade extension but that the orders were not obeyed by the petty autocrats in charge of the principal posts on the Bay. It is true, and all the more damning a fact. "The Old Worthies" in London were as incompetent as their servants. In the year David Thompson left England, it will be remembered, London dispatched to the Bay, for distribution among the savages, 150 copies of a tract on "The Country Clergyman's Advice to Parishioners." London wrote many orders that exploration be made and that trade be extended. Historians have cited them. But when years passed, when governors of forts continued to write evasive replies and to fight among themselves instead of uniting against the Nor'Westers, when the

system of conducting business adopted in Prince Rupert's day was still maintained after forty years of utterly changed conditions, the blame shifts back where it belongs—with the Governor and Committee.

Contrast is abundantly furnished in David Thompson's story. J. B. Tyrrell of the Canadian Geological Survey, the first white man to see much of the land Hearne discovered, has surveyed and explored over thousands of miles mapped by Thompson. He used Thompson's maps in his own work fifty years ago, he uncovered and made ready for publication Thompson's narrative, and Tyrrell's long experience and knowledge of Canada gives weight to his statement that Thompson was "the greatest practical land geographer the world has produced." Tyrrell has summarized the Welch youth's work for the Hudson's Bay Company beginning with his arrival on the Bay when fourteen years old.

In those thirteen years Thompson traveled about 9,000 miles and made careful surveys, checked by many astronomical observations, of 3,500 miles. He determined the positions of eight places in the interior and of York Factory. He also made and minutely recorded observations on climate, natural phenomena and the Indians.

Thompson was more than anxious to continue his work. His lone journey to Lake Athabasca is sufficient indication of his zeal for discovery and surveying. But when he had completed that journey, had tried at such hazard and privation to pave the way for extension of Hudson's Bay trade, he was rewarded by instructions to discontinue his efforts.

The effect of that order from Colen can easily be imagined. Young Thompson remained through the winter in the little log hut he had built on Reindeer Lake, far up near the edge of the barren lands. He reviewed his thirteen years with the Hudson's Bay Company and foresaw what the future offered, and in the spring he walked seventy-five miles to the nearest post of the North West Company. On May 23, 1797, he made an entry in his journal:

"This day I left the service of the Hudson's Bay Company and entered that of the Company of Merchants from Canada. May God Almighty prosper me."

When the Nor'Westers' brigade went out, Thompson accompanied it to Grand Portage, on Lake Superior, headquarters of the Montreal men. There he was welcomed with open arms by William McGillivray and Alexander Mackenzie, "gentlemen of enlarged views," as he wrote in his journal, and immediately employed to continue his work of surveying.

Grand Portage was in United States territory and the North West Company had many posts in Minnesota and at least one in Wisconsin. The forty-ninth parallel had been designated by treaty as the boundary. Beginning at Grand Portage, the treaty stipulated, the line followed the Pigeon River westward on the Nor'Westers' canoe route to the Lake of the Woods and from the northwest angle of that lake west to the source of the Mississippi River, thence along the forty-ninth parallel to the summit of the Rocky Mountains. The North West Company leaders wanted this boundary determined and their instructions to Thompson were:

Determine the source of the Mississippi River and the forty-ninth parallel; visit the Mandan village on the Missouri River and while there search for fossil bones of large mammals; determine the position of North West trading posts.

It was a big order, but the young Welchman, denied his ambition in the north, wrote the following in his journal: "How very different the liberal and public spirit of this North West Company of Merchants of Canada; from the mean, selfish policy of the Hudson's Bay Company styled Honorable; and whom, at little expense, might have had the northern part of this continent surveyed to the Pacific Ocean, and greatly extended their Trading Posts; whatever they have done, the British Government has obliged them to do."

Young Thompson must have won the immediate esteem of the energetic Nor'Westers for he remained at Grand Portage only four days. He went west to the prairies in Manitoba, determining the positions of posts there, and then, in winter, made a terrible journey through blizzards to the Mandans on the Missouri, arriving more than six years before Lewis and Clark.

Historians point out, as evidence of Hudson's Bay trade expansion, that he found Hudson's Bay men there before him. But neither the early North West nor Hudson's Bay traders on the

Missouri were servants of the companies. All were freemen who for several years had been getting small trade outfits from the two rivals in the north and conducting an insignificant traffic on their own account.

Thompson returned to the Assiniboine, went east and found that the North West post at Pembina on Red River was nearly a mile south of the boundary, and then crossed Minnesota before spring, visiting many posts, fixing their positions and discovering what he believed to be the source of the Mississippi only a few miles north of the now accepted lake. This, of course, was far to the southwest of Lake of the Woods, a fact the treaty makers did not know in 1792. Thompson went on to what is now Duluth, there he found a broken canoe, patched it, and surveyed the south shore of Lake Superior to Sault Ste. Marie.

Evidently this was not in his instructions, and at the Sault he met Alexander Mackenzie. That renowned and energetic traveler was astounded and told Thompson more had been done in ten months than he had expected could be accomplished in two years. The next day William McGillivray arrived and he and Mackenzie asked Thompson to continue his survey around the north shore of Lake Superior to Grand Portage. He arrived in June, having in less than a year completed 4,000 miles of surveying which modern work has shown to be astonishingly accurate.

That summer of 1798 Thompson was sent to Lac La Biche near the upper Athabasca and in the summer of 1799 he surveyed down river to Methye Portage, connecting link between the Athabasca and Churchill River systems. On his way back to Grand Portage he stopped at Ile à la Crosse and was married to Charlotte Small, a half-breed girl of fourteen believed to have been a daughter of Patrick Small, an early Nor'Wester. She, and in later years their growing family, accompanied him on most of his journeys until he retired in 1812.

The North West Company was now becoming interested in the country beyond the Rocky Mountains and Thompson was sent to the upper Saskatchewan. Until 1802 he did much exploring among the mountains from the North to the South Saskatchewan. In a letter written by Thompson in 1845 he said he crossed the mountains to the headwaters of the Columbia in 1801 but

was driven back by eastern Indians, who objected to the western Indians receiving guns and ammunition.

Thompson crossed through Howse Pass, which Duncan McGilivray had discovered in 1800 and named after Jasper Howse, a North West clerk. Nine years later a Hudson's Bay clerk, Joseph Howse, went through the mountains but returned in three weeks. Yet one historian makes the statement Joseph Howse was sent from York Factory in 1795 and discovered the pass which bears his name.

Thompson next went north, crossing to the Peace River and surveying that from the mountains to Lake Athabasca. From there the Nor'Westers sent him to the muskrat country, undoubtedly because of his familiarity with it. The Hudson's Bay was regaining the trade of that region. Tyrrell says the Nor'Westers had become negligent. There Thompson found himself opposed to his school boy friend, George Charles, now in command at York Factory. They had a pleasant winter visiting one another and exchanging books. In the spring Thompson, departing, left some of his effects in care of Charles.

In 1804, on the union of the North West and X Y Companies, Thompson was made a partner. About this time beaver were becoming scarce and in 1806 Thompson was sent to Rocky Mountain House to cross to the Columbia in 1807. This he did, through Howse Pass, opening trade among the Indians in British Columbia, Idaho, Montana and Washington.

The Hudson's Bay Company learned of this and in 1808 wrote to York Factory asking how far Thompson had gone. The answer was "across the mountains," and in 1809 Joseph Howse was sent to follow Thompson. Howse left Edmonton on July 18th and on August 8th Thompson met him on Kootenay Plain already on his way back. The next year the Hudson's Bay Company made its one effort to reach the Pacific slope. Howse was sent again, and with men and trade goods he crossed to the Columbia and spent the winter on the Pacific slope in what is now Montana.

But the alert Nor'Westers sent a man with him. This was James McMillan, who became a chief factor after 1821. Evidently he performed his task well, for Howse went back east the next

spring and never until 1821 did another Hudson's Bay man get west of the Rockies.

In the next few years Thompson explored the whole Columbia River basin, established many trading posts and surveyed the Columbia River from mouth to source. The river is about 1,200 miles long and parts of it have never been surveyed since. Nor was this all. He traded as he went, and several times he took his bales of fur from the Columbia to Rainy Lake in the summer, a tremendous journey in itself.

The man was indefatigable. Even if he surveyed a route, he checked it on each retracing of it. He was always busy. The Piegan Indians tried desperately to stop his traffic with the Indians beyond the mountains, and several times he was in difficult situations. Once they blocked him at Howse Pass but he would not be thwarted. He went far north, found Athabasca Pass, and thus reached the Columbia by a trail which became the highway to the Pacific slope.

History records Thompson's failure to reach the mouth of the Columbia ahead of the Astorians, that the North West Company lost out in the race for the commanding position in that rich district. Tyrrell says there is nothing in Thompson's journal referring to any such hurried expedition. The Nor'Westers were well informed of Astor's plans and Thompson knew of their expedition. But, according to Tyrrell, Thompson already had several good posts in the valley, he had claimed the country in the name of Great Britain, and he was busy exploring the best routes.

It was on June 15, 1811, that Thompson reached the mouth of the Columbia and found Astoria occupied by Astor's men. That fall he completed his survey of the river to the source and in 1812 he crossed the Rockies, never to return. He spent 1813 and 1814 preparing a huge map of fur land for the North West Company, which hung in the big hall at Fort William on Lake Superior, and he accompanied it with a list of seventy-eight posts of the company, giving the latitude and longitude of each.

His share in the North West Company had given him enough to retire, and he purchased a home in eastern Canada. But he was only forty-four years old and evidently his active life did not permit repose. From 1816 to 1826 he was employed in surveying

the international boundary from the St. Lawrence to Lake of the Woods for the British Commissioners.

Thompson, who had claimed the Columbia valley for his country, though after Lewis and Clark's arrival, and who knew more of the boundary from Lake Superior to the Pacific than any other man, was much incensed by the final treaty decisions. He wrote of how Peter Pond suggested the present boundary to the United States Commissioners, as a result of which the States got "twice as much as they deserved." But Thompson, while pointing out how the Hudson's Bay Company might have completed a survey to the Pacific much earlier, places the blame where it belongs, with the British government, by which, he says, "North America was held in contempt." He also referred to "that block-head Lord Ashburton."

David Thompson is one of the most remarkable men in the story of the North West Company. Tyrrell has estimated that he traveled and surveyed 50,000 miles of water and land routes. That in itself was a stupendous task, but in practically all his life in the wilderness he was engaged as a fur trader, extending operations and personally conducting commerce with the Indians.

He left almost complete journals from 1784 to 1850, sixty-six years. They fill forty volumes of manuscripts. He also wrote a narrative, which Tyrrell found and edited and which was published by the Champlain Society of Canada. His scientific interest was greater than that of any other man in fur land and he left vast quantities of notes on many subjects.

Sprinkled through Thompson's journals are frequent expressions of thanks to Providence for a safe arrival, and these are by no means perfunctory. The man never forgot the training of his early school days and his Christian faith was sincere. Yet he did not impose it on others and he was liked and admired by his fellows in the Company.

He took his half-breed wife east to live, a practice not common with Nor'Westers. They had seven sons and six daughters. One daughter said a picture of John Bunyan was so much like her father it might have been his own. J. J. Bigsby of the boundary commission left this picture of the explorer:

"Never mind his Bunyan-like face and cropped hair; he has a

very powerful mind, and a singular faculty of picture making. He can create a wilderness and people it with warring savages . . . so clearly and palpably, that only shut your eyes and feel the snow flakes on your cheeks as he talks."

Though he retired after fifteen years in the North West Company with enough money to last his lifetime, he did not keep it. He loaned a congregation money to build a church, and when they could not meet the notes he deeded the property to the organization. He set his sons up in business. They failed, and he paid their debts. In his last years he was in want. Near the end he recorded that he had borrowed two shillings six pence of a friend. "Thank God for this relief." He pawned his beloved instruments, even his clothes. This grand old man who had accomplished so much, who had lived so simply and so generously and honorably, died when he was eighty-five. Three months later the woman whom he married at Ile à la Crosse fifty-eight years earlier was buried beside him not far from Montreal.

His grave was not marked. For half a century after his death he was scarcely known. Bancroft paid him a tribute. None of his writings were published until Tyrrell and the Champlain Society brought out his "Narrative."

Today governments and railroads still depend on some of his surveys. The services of that long, active and successful life were the Hudson's Bay Company's for the asking. No, for a word of encouragement. It is curious how often Radisson's story is repeated in the tale we are unfolding.



## CHAPTER XXIV

The most deeply grounded legend in connection with the story of the Hudson's Bay Company is perhaps that which paints the North West Company as a lawless, ruthless, destructive organization that was guilty of murder, debauchery of the Indians, enslavement of its own laborers, extinction of fur-bearing animals, unscrupulous methods of trade and the flooding of fur land with liquor.

In contrast to this picture is that of a Hudson's Bay Company that was honorable and just in its dealings with Indians, that was always opposed to the use of liquor, that carefully maintained the number of fur bearing animals and was served by men of unquestioned probity and fierce loyalty. The assumption has always been that the Hudson's Bay was lily white, a Montreal merchant a scoundrel. Accepted history has preserved these pictures so well they have long been unquestioned. Even the work of recognized authorities today has engraved them more deeply.

The persistence of this conception has been due to three reasons—unquestioned acceptance of early writings, the fierce passions engendered by the final struggle of the two companies, and a complete lack of understanding of fundamental factors in the fur trade on the part of those who have attempted to tell the story. Coupled with these is that fixed postulation of the Hudson's Bay Company's immutability through two and a half centuries.

Bias has always entered into the story. Something about the Hudson's Bay Company's history seems to preclude a lack of passion in the telling. Drama draws a writer in the beginning and soon engulfs him. This is evidenced by the fact that never has a scholarly work on the subject been completed, while with the North West Company as a whole only one such effort has been achieved.

We have examined some of the principal legends and the results have been so enlightening there is an incentive to go further.

Immediately we encounter the misleading general statement and disregard of the time element, chief causes of misconception. It is probable that every charge made against the North West Company can be substantiated in some instance. All praise of the Hudson's Bay Company is justified at certain times and in certain respects. It is largely on this basis that so much misleading history has been written.

As pointed out in a previous chapter, charges against the North West Company have come from three principal sources—the Hudson's Bay Company itself, Lord Selkirk and Abbé George Dugas. Whatever the Hudson's Bay or its traders have said must, naturally, be examined with great care. Lord Selkirk's entrance into the fur trade brought the first bitterness and the first real bloodshed. He led in the struggle against the Nor'Westers, participated in person and directed activities of the Hudson's Bay Company at a time when, as even the Company's most ardent adherents have admitted, one was as bad as the other.

Acceptance of Selkirk's charges can be understood. His colonization scheme was of high purpose and evidence of a philanthropic spirit. His original motives undoubtedly were sincere. Thus historians have considered him to be a man of fine character and altogether trustworthy. Acceptance of Dugas was as common, probably because he was a priest and hence unimpeachable, and yet the man's bias and hatred were so evident it is incomprehensible how he could have been quoted without question.

The missionary has been considered an unprejudiced observer because he had no direct interest in fur land competition. Fur trading companies have always posed as friends of missions and have contributed to them. That was policy. Yet between the fur trader in the field and the missionary much friction has existed, due to several causes. The historian has never known this but has considered a missionary's testimony to be impartial.

Those are the sources of accusation against the North West Company. We have already looked into the time element and found that the justified charge of lawlessness and debauchery made against some of the first British traders who followed the French has been spread across the North West Company for fifty years. We have a further instance of it in tracing a single

expression. Occasionally, in recent works on allied subjects, the term "wolves of the north" is applied to the Nor'Westers. Going back about twenty-five years, we find in one history of the Hudson's Bay Company that the words are taken from the statement of a French Canadian priest who applied them to French Canadian traders left in the west upon the conquest of Canada. Later the historian, using quotation marks, applied the expression to early British traders, and finally, without quotation marks to the Nor'Westers at the height of their success, and embracing, of course, such men as Alexander and Roderick Mackenzie, David Thompson, Alexander Henry and many others whose characters and careers entitle them to just consideration.

"Wolves of the north" is not particularly important, though it implies an accusation, but its genesis and use are highly typical. The sixty years between the fall of French power and the union of the two companies presents too many actors and too great and too rapid a development of fur trade methods and scope for any charge or statement to be carried through. Yet this has been done constantly.

Charges of unscrupulous methods on the part of the North West Company and the common implication that the Hudson's Bay Company was guiltless come under the same heading but are due in larger extent to the historian's ignorance of fundamental facts of the fur trade.

Viewed from the study, the pulpit or any other source of theoretical morality, the ethics of a competitive fur trade have always been bad and always will be. It is inevitable that when a superior race comes in contact with an inferior race injustice will result. It has always been true, and probably always will be. That is not a matter of morals but of human nature. Likewise, when a man comes in contact with an inferior human in a remote wilderness and gains an advantage, he seeks to maintain that advantage by using deceptive tactics against an opponent.

Commonly, in the fur trade, this divergence from a strict code was little more serious than the incident Duncan Cameron so frankly admitted and which was told in his own words in a previous chapter. Such subterfuges were so much a part of competition when Nor'Westers and Hudson's Bay men struggled for fur

they were always expected. They are a recognized part of competition in the north today. In all the history of the Canadian fur trade, one is safe in saying that more than ninety-nine per cent of rivalry has been expressed in this manner. The fur trade has never been a matter of force but of wits. Volumes could be filled with such incidents as Duncan Cameron related. The successful trader has never been a bully but a keen-minded man who viewed his calling much as a so-called statesman views international diplomacy.

Instances of violence occurred inevitably. Dugas cites them, and so does Selkirk, and historians have repeated the stories. But even through the fanatical bias of Dugas we can see how relatively unimportant these isolated instances are when placed against a background of thousands of miles of wilderness and spread through forty years of competition. But as to murder and violence and robbery being the accepted policy of the Nor'Westers, or even being sanctioned by them, there is no evidence whatever. As was suggested in a previous chapter, conflict occurred in the forested area and not on the plains. Men could not afford to fight where there was constant danger from Indians. But in the Nipigon country, for instance, with natives widely scattered, with two traders cooped up for the winter in adjoining posts, with each spying on the other, giving credit to Indians and losing that credit when the Indian sold his fur to an opponent instead of paying his debt, it is easily conceivable how animosities would develop and eventually blaze into violence.

The few perpetrators were usually clerks of the North West Company, men with a future depending upon a record made in gathering fur, hot-headed young Highlanders anxious to further the cause of their employees. When they advanced goods to an Indian and saw that Indian take his furs to the Hudson's Bay Company because of some special inducement, they sometimes tried to get that fur by force. Undoubtedly they were encouraged in this by the comparatively supine behavior of the Hudson's Bay employees.

It is to be remarked that in none of the affairs of violence have we had the Nor'Westers' side of the story, and we are speaking of those incidents preceding Selkirk's entrance into the situation.

One very enlightening comment is found, however, in a letter written on January 21, 1811, by George Keith, on the Mackenzie River, to Roderick Mackenzie. Keith was an intelligent, honorable partner of the North West Company and after commenting on the killing of Æneas McDonnell, a North West clerk, by a Hudson's Bay man, he wrote:

"We are all too apt to tamper with the Hudson's Bay Company and it generally happens unfortunately that the most serious disputes between opponents take their origin in mere trifles."

When we consider the thousands of men employed on both sides through the first forty years of competition, the enormous distance from civilization, the isolation of far northern posts, the aggressive nature of the Nor'Westers and the opportunities for violence, the record is remarkably free.

But we are assured the Nor'Westers were unscrupulous in their methods of getting fur, of debauching the Indians and of denuding the north of fur-bearing animals. As opposed to this we are told that the Hudson's Bay Company preserved the fur-bearers by compelling Indians to make long journeys to the Bay in summer and thus prevent the killing of animals during and after breeding season.

In discussing these questions, practically all writers have displayed a complete lack of knowledge of the fundamental factors of the fur trade. Conditions and methods charged to the Nor'Westers were not due to them but to competition. Most of them exist today. In the fifty years in which the Hudson's Bay Company held a monopoly in Canada, the situation was ideal. The Indian became honest and self-respecting and efficient. It was within the power of the fur trader to make the Indian so, and the fur trader was glad to do it. Except as a game that taxes his wits, the fur trader hates competition. He hates the use of liquor. The Canadian Indian and the fur trade would be better off today if the Hudson's Bay monopoly had continued in force. But monopoly is against political theory on this continent. It had to go, and the Indian has been the biggest sufferer.

The very nature of the Indian, which the historian has never understood, has been an important factor in the evils of competition. It is difficult for a white man to realize that the Indian had

only contempt for him. In the early days of the fur trade the savages believed the white man came among them because he was hungry at home. The white man's achievement in the matter of making guns and ammunition and cloth and kettles and knives was not remarkable to the Indian. That same white man became lost in the forest and could not hunt so efficiently. Altogether he was an inferior person.

The Indian believed that, and still believes it, although the intelligent white man can go into the wilderness and out-Indian the Indian in everything he does. He can tan better buckskin, make better moccasins and a better canoe, can hunt and trap more efficiently than the Indian. Historians do not know this, but it is true, and not in isolated instances. The white man is doing it today. In a comparatively recent development in the north he is sweeping across fur land, trapping as the Indian never could.

The romantic conception of the Indian, with his flowery speeches, still holds the historian. His words are quoted in support of certain contentions of the old Hudson's Bay Company in the matter of summer-killed fur, the just treatment accorded the natives and the general rascality of the Nor'Westers, but only a fur trader knows what such speeches are worth. He occasionally listens to them today.

The improvidence of the Indian has often been spoken of but writers have not known how deeply that improvidence touched the Indian's entire character and dictated the very method of conducting the fur trade. As with a child, the future does not exist for the Indian. In districts where caribou or buffalo were plentiful, the Indian killed wantonly, far in excess of his needs, and never provided for the next day. In forested districts he killed a moose, moved his camp to the meat, gorged until it was gone, then started hunting again. Beyond the Rockies, in places where salmon was the sole source of food, the savage was driven to drying fish that came up the streams to spawn, but this was an exception and the practice of weaker tribes that dared not leave secluded mountain districts. In the time of the Nor'Westers, as today, the fur hunting Indian wakened in the morning in a teepee or wigwam bare of food and went out to hunt his breakfast. Regular meals were, and are, unknown.

The same viewpoint applied to fur. Before the coming of the white man the Indian killed beaver for food, winter and summer. It is true that when the savages went in large numbers to Hudson Bay before the coming of French and British traders they were thereby prevented from summer killing in their home districts, though they killed as they traveled. That has been claimed as a beneficent and far-sighted policy of the Hudson's Bay Company and an argument against the coming of the Nor'Westers. We have learned enough, however, of the inertia of the old Company and the complete lack of enterprise on the part of its servants to understand that it was not a matter of foresight or a desire for game preservation on the part of the "Gentlemen Adventurers." The argument was offered subsequently and was merely a weak effort to bolster up a weak policy.

But the improvidence of the Indian influenced the whole conduct of the fur trade as well as his own larder. If he would not conserve food, the most important thing in his life, how could he be expected to conserve the goods he purchased from traders? He had no tomorrow. He has none today. Thus it became necessary for the trader to advance goods that the Indian might hunt fur with which to pay for these goods. Without competition, that worked very well. If the Indian wanted more goods, he had to pay his debts, and in the spring he came in, settled accounts and went into debt again.

The Indian was a savage. His entire concept of life failed to coincide at any point with a white man's. He was a child, and his morals, like a child's, were matters of the moment and of expediency. In most districts he had a peculiar and rigid type of honesty. He respected a cache. If he took anything he expected to pay for it, and of this there are abundant and touching examples. But if he were advanced goods for a winter's hunt by a fur trading company, that was not a business obligation between himself and a corporation but a personal concession on the part of the individual trader. And as such, by the peculiar, expedient and puerile reasoning of the savage mind, it became an obligation which was immediately canceled by an unfriendly act on the part of the creditor.

This, of course, is only a childish evasion of a responsibility,

but the Indian was a child. The fur trader recognized this fact and coped with it as best he could, thinking always of profits as does any business man. The historian, mildly or fiercely contemplating the matter in his study, and if he were a Hudson's Bay historian he contemplated it fiercely, has never been aware of it.

Thus the historian becomes incensed when he finds Joseph Frobisher intercepting the Lake Athabasca Indians on the Churchill River in 1774 and inducing them to part with valuable furs which the honest Indians were carrying to Hudson Bay to pay their honest debts. Likewise the Hudson's Bay Company was incensed. One writer says Hearne was governor of Fort Churchill at the time and became very angry when the Indians appeared with little fur, and that Hearne reported to London that a "scurvy trick" had been played on the Indians.

Aside from the fact that Hearne was not governor of Fort Churchill in 1774 but building Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan, the historian ignored the reasoning of the Indian mind. If this white man would bring goods to him and eliminate the necessity of a long journey on which his fellows had often starved to death, why consider oneself under obligations to another white man who refused to perform the same service?

Frobisher's action was contributing to the delinquency of a juvenile to be sure, but it has always been fur trading and it always will be fur trading until the white man has eliminated the Indian as a harvester of pelts. And if the historian is to censure the Frobishers, why does he not complete the picture? Two years later Alexander Henry accompanied Frobisher to the Churchill and between them they obtained 12,000 beaver skins besides many finer furs, all destined for the Hudson's Bay Company. Henry's journal has been accessible to all writers. Yet none has quoted this from a book which has never been questioned:

"Having been fortunate enough to administer medical relief to one of these Indians, during their stay, I came to be considered as a physician, and found that this was a character held in high veneration. Their solicitude and credulity, as to drugs and nostrums, had exposed them to gross deceptions, on the part of the agents of the Hudson's Bay Company. One of the chiefs informed me, that he had been at the Bay the year before, and there pur-



chased a quantity of medicines, which he would allow me to inspect. Accordingly, he brought a bag, containing numerous small papers, in which I found lumps of white sugar, grains of coffee, pepper, allspice, cloves, tea, nutmegs, ginger and other things of this kind, sold as specifics against evil spirits, and against the dangers of battle; as giving power over enemies, and particularly the white bear (grizzly), of which the Indians in these latitudes are much afraid:—others were infallible against barrenness in women; against difficult labours; and against a variety of other afflictions. In a second parcel, I found small prints; the identical ones which, in England, are commonly sold in sheets to children, but each of which was here transformed into a talisman, for the cure of some evil, or obtention of some delight:—No. 1. 'A sailor kissing his mistress, on his return from sea';—this, worn about the person of a gallant, attracted, though concealed, the affections of the sex! No. 2. 'A soldier in arms';—this poured a sentiment of valor into the possessor, and gave him the strength of a giant!

"By means of these commodities, many customers were secured to the company; and even those Indians, who shortened their voyage by dealing with us, sent forward one canoe, laden with beaver skins, to purchase articles of this kind, at Cumberland House. I did not venture to dispute their value."

It is not particularly important, this mild method of deceiving an ignorant savage, but it has been successfully overlooked by zealous writers who have tried to paint the Nor'Westers in the blackest possible colors and preserve the lily whiteness of the Hudson's Bay.

The fur trade and its methods are only a phase of the attitude of the white race toward natural resources on the American continent. Timber, minerals, oil, salmon, all have been exploited, depleted and wasted. Nearly all have existed in remote areas where the law was ineffectual, and to which public opinion gave little heed. It has been a common postulation that such things did not occur on the British side of the international boundary, but the fur trade movement is a complete expression of a spirit which is distinctly of the American continent.

Competition is the pet child of democracy, and the Montreal

fur traders were the first to find opportunity to scoff at royal charters and express an awakened people's scorn for restriction of individual effort. That the North West Company grew into a powerful organization, developed the idea of big business and itself achieved a monopoly of might rather than of regal decree is only in accord with the economic and political trend in America. It became the black sheep of history because it flouted British custom and precedence and was the first exponent of the American idea as opposed to the European. When one considers the opportunities for ruthless oppression and exploitation open to it, and its very real achievement in the matter of exploration, efficiency and spread of British influence, its true behavior becomes the more remarkable. The British historian should deal in praise rather than in condemnation.

But British, and many other, historians have had no conception of the influence of a remote wilderness on moral values. There never has been a frontier without lawlessness, a fact which the Englishman more than any other refuses to admit. It hurts his pride to concede that all is not orderly beneath the red ensign. He has no recollection of a frontier in his own country and no sympathy with or understanding of the inevitable conditions accompanying the spread of civilization.

As we have said before, the charges brought against the North West Company are more justly laid at the door of competition. All the abuses of the fur trade disappeared upon the union of the two companies and the establishment of complete monopoly. With the exception of the use of liquor and of violence, they reappeared in the present century when the Hudson's Bay Company's strict control began to lose force in the face of unrestrained trade and the growth of rapid transportation in the north. The Indian evades his debts today. He accepts advances from one trader and sells his fur to another.

It is competition that reduces the number of fur bearing animals. In the half century in which the Hudson's Bay Company held a monopoly, and for many years afterward, it could enforce a policy of conservation. It did so because it was good business. Fur production increased. But near the end of the nineteenth century, when the spread of settlements and of competition was be-

ginning to affect fur land, depletion in some districts became so marked that legal steps were taken to stop it. Provinces enacted laws. The killing of certain animals, such as beaver and otter, was prohibited in wide areas for various lengths of time. This practice has grown. Provinces and the federal government have adopted restrictive measures. Yet there are no impassioned denunciations of fur trading companies today. At last it is recognized that the fur trade is a business and not the subject of racial and factional bias and prejudice.

When that bias and passion are eliminated, and at this distant day we are able to do so, the North West-Hudson's Bay controversy resolves itself into a question of efficiency rather than of morals, of vigor and ability as opposed to inertia and ineptitude, of aliveness and vision against inaction and torpidity. And on this basis the record speaks for itself.

## CHAPTER XXV

As the evils of competition have been blamed upon the Nor'-Westers, so has the even greater evil of the use of liquor in the fur traffic. Liquor was used, large quantities of it, in the struggle between the two companies. It was a disgrace to the white race exactly as were slavery and child labor, and it was employed for exactly the same reasons.

When a white man first gave liquor to an Indian and saw the effect, he comprehended the immediate commercial advantage to himself. White men never lost sight of that immediate advantage and the practice was ended, not by law, but by monopoly and commercial exigency. In the long run, liquor did not pay.

Competition always prevented any restriction in the use of liquor. Monopoly permitted restriction. Despite the claims, moral or legal force did not end the use of liquor in the fur trade on either side of the international boundary. So long as an Indian hunted fur, liquor was used in the United States, where competition was never restrained. So long as competition existed in Canada, liquor was used, and even when the united Hudson's Bay and North West Companies proscribed its use in the interior, they continued to employ liquor along the American border, where the traders of the two nations competed.

In the first century of its existence the Hudson's Bay Company did not use liquor in any appreciable quantity but deserves no credit therefor. The white man debauches an inferior race when he strives against another white man for trade. When he has no rivals he refrains from the use of liquor if he is building for the future and not operating merely for a season. To give or sell liquor to an Indian is uneconomic and dangerous. It makes an unmitigated nuisance of an Indian about a trading post and converts him into a potential murderer. It decreases his efficiency as a hunter, and in the North West-Hudson's Bay struggle it

*Hyperny!*

slightly decreased fur production through the deaths of Indians in the innumerable drunken brawls.

Whatever the origin and the commercial exigencies of the employment of liquor in the fur trade, the moral effects upon the Indian himself were appalling. Fur traders' journals paint them frankly and brutally. Alexander Henry the Younger gives us this picture in words far more impassioned than he was accustomed to use:

"A common dramshop in a civilized country is a paradise compared to the Indian trade, where two or more different interests are striving to obtain a greater share of the Indians' hunts—particularly among the Saulteurs (Ojibwas), who are always ready to take advantage of the situation by disposing of their skins and furs to the highest bidder. No ties, former favors or services rendered, will induce them to give up their skins for one penny less than they can get elsewhere. Gratitude is a stranger to them; grant them a favor today, and tomorrow they will suppose it to be their due. Love of liquor is their ruling passion, and when intoxicated they will commit any crime to obtain more drink. To this end they frequently pillage a trader or even threaten him with death; and sometimes, when sober, they rob him of wet and dry goods."

Henry's entry for January 4, 1806, when he was at Pembina, on Red River, is as follows: "Men and women have been drinking a match for three days and nights, during which it has been drink, fight—drink, fight—drink, and fight again—guns, axes and knives their weapons—very disagreeable."

The younger Henry has been accused of having little imagination, probably because he has not been read with understanding. In the midst of this distressing chapter, and from Henry's innumerable references to drunken Indians, we cannot refrain from quoting one entry. Some Indians had come to trade and were drinking. "Grand Gueule stabbed Capot Rouge, Le Boeuf stabbed his young wife in the arm. Little Shell almost beat his mother's brains out with a club, and there was terrible fighting among them. I sowed garden seeds."

Several journals give details of these "drinking matches," as the traders called them, and the resulting bestiality is incompre-

hensible to civilized people. Because the Indian found nothing wrong in drinking, he permitted his children to indulge, and whole families and even bands became drunk.

It is commonly understood that liquor has an entirely different effect on an Indian than on a white man but few comprehend the degree of this difference. The jovial exhilaration we know and enjoy is forbidden the red man. Mayhem becomes the mildest of his desires. The killing of brother, wife, husband or parent was not unusual in a "drinking match," and invariably the slayer was wholly unaware of his crime when he became sober. Biting off noses and ears, especially by husbands and wives, was a most popular diversion. For pictures of genuine horror, the journals of Alexander Henry are recommended.

The writer of this volume is not dealing with the question of fur trade and use of liquor among Indians from an academic standpoint. He has worked with Ojibwas in lumber camps and on a log drive and has trapped in districts inhabited only by Indians, and in every instance liquor was accessible to the natives. Twice he has been nearly killed by liquor-crazed savages and has seen a great many of them fighting drunk.

He has worked in a trading post, advancing credit and buying fur, and has trapped and hunted and fished and traveled with Indians. He has spent months at an isolated Hudson's Bay post, has been taken back of the scenes when several dozen hunters came in with their families and fur in June and were given "debt" in the fall. He has known and talked with a large number of Ojibwas in the course of a dozen years and has known many men who bought their fur.

He has seen an experienced anthropologist tricked by sober-visaged Indians who later convulsed a village with accounts of the "legends" they had told to the scientist, and which have since appeared in government publications. Perhaps he is the only writer who has attempted to tell a comprehensive story of the Hudson's Bay Company and has purchased fur from an Indian, conversed with an Indian in his own language or has been close enough to a drunken Indian to have that crazed savage try to stab him.

In view of that experience, the writer has read journals of old

Nor'Westers and Hudson's Bay men with an understanding rather different than that of writers in the past. When Alexander Henry tells of a drinking match, the scene is vivid, and from many of the charges of Selkirk and Dugas there emerges only a common fur land practice in which the Hudson's Bay man squealed because a Nor'Wester got the better of him.

As was said earlier in the chapter, the Hudson's Bay Company did not use liquor before the coming of the Montreal men. In 1770 only 250 gallons were sent to the Bay, and probably all of that was consumed by the Company's employees. But, according to J. B. Tyrrell, who had access to old records in York Factory, in 1785 the Hudson's Bay Company sent 2,028 gallons to York Factory alone, and in 1794 sent 7,900 gallons to the same post. At that time the Company also operated a small still at York. The maximum amount sent out by the Hudson's Bay in any year was 12,600 gallons for all posts.

The Hudson's Bay Company of those days could have claimed truthfully that it did not use liquor until the Montreal men brought it into their country, but the fact remains that it did not hesitate to use liquor when its opponents did.

The Nor'Westers are blamed for introducing liquor. When the first French settlers on the St. Lawrence persuaded Indians to bring fur to them, long before the founding of the Hudson's Bay Company, they gave the Indians liquor for a day or more as a preliminary to trade. When the French pressed westward they continued the use of alcohol. They had used it around the Great Lakes for a century before the fall of French power.

The first British traders to follow in their footsteps employed French voyageurs, interpreters and guides. They patterned their operations on the French method of conducting the trade. They used liquor, and many of those early British traders undoubtedly used it most unscrupulously. All the early Nor'Westers used it, and in their factional fights they used more than ever.

This is not an attempt to defend the North West men. There is no defense except that of commercial expediency. We are merely tracing the inception and growth of the practice. When the X Y and North West Companies were at the height of their conflict they sent 21,299 gallons into the Indian country, accord-

ing to the Nor'Westers' own figures. After combining, the united companies sent only 10,800 gallons in 1806 and by 1808 had reduced that to 9,000.

When the early French traders sold liquor to the Indians, the Jesuits, who often accompanied the traders, were appalled by the results and, to stop the practice, imposed painful penances. The French quickly got around that by giving the liquor away, and the Indian became so accustomed to this that the method was, perforce, continued by the British. The thousands of gallons of alcohol so laboriously paddled and packed into the interior were presented to the Indians, the cost being charged to overhead. Such a gift was preliminary to the actual trading of fur, though sometimes, according to Nor'Westers' journals, liquor was exchanged for pelts.

The custom of the Hudson's Bay Company was no different, though David Thompson told how, when sent from Fort Churchill to York Factory in 1785 in charge of two Indians, the guides were paid a gallon when they started and three gallons additional when they reached York. Thompson wrote of whole bands of Indians, men and women, being drunk at Bay posts for two or three days at a time.

The charge has been made that at the height of the competition the North West Company used 50,000 gallons of the liquor in a single year. This is preposterous on the face of it. Fifty thousand gallons would weigh, with containers, 200 tons or more, which would fill 133 north canoes and require the labor of five or six hundred men for transportation.

Appalling as were the many instances of bestiality recorded in Nor'Westers' journals, and iniquitous as was the practice of supplying the Indians with liquor, nevertheless the whole matter becomes a little less significant when viewed in the light of the great expanse of country and the numbers affected. In a memorial to the government in 1808, the North West Company showed it had used an average of 10,700 gallons annually in the past three years and that this was spread from Labrador almost to the mouth of the Mackenzie among 60,000 Indians and 1,000 or more white men. The Nor'Westers were protesting against a bill before the British Parliament which would have prohibited the use of



liquor in the Indian country. They said they would lose three-fourths of their trade because Americans on the plains would supply the Indians.

Sordid and indefensible as is this liquor question, we may leave it with the sole recorded instance of deviation from a universal practice. Once when David Thompson started through the Rockies to his posts on the Columbia, two of his partners in the North West Company, Donald McTavish and Jo McDonald, insisted that he take liquor with him. Thompson objected, probably pointing out that he did not use it himself and had been getting fur on the Pacific slope without it.

"For I had made it a law to myself," he wrote, "that no alcohol should pass the mountains in my company, and thus be clear of the sad sight of drunkenness, and its many evils."

One is surprised, in reading Thompson's narrative, that he permitted his partners to "overrule" him. He started with two small kegs. But when he approached a rocky defile he placed the kegs on the most vicious horse in his train, knowing it would, in seeking to rid itself of the load, soon wreck the containers. This the horse quickly and effectually accomplished.

Thompson later wrote McTavish and McDonald what he had done and in "the next six years I had charge of the fur trade on the west side of the mountains, no further attempt was made to introduce spirituous liquors."

Any elation we may experience because of this single moral victory is immediately dissipated, however, by the knowledge that Thompson had achieved a little monopoly of his own on the Pacific slope. He had no competition there.

In view of the present experience of a large and enlightened nation in dealing with the liquor problem, and of the whole history of alcohol, we are scarcely in a position to pass judgment upon the moral tone of either the North West or Hudson's Bay Companies.

## CHAPTER XXVI

Any survey of the development of transportation would not be complete without due recognition of the marvelous system employed by the Nor'Westers. The infinite waterways of Canada permitted it, the first French traders worked out the method, but it remained for the driving, efficient Highlanders to perfect a means of carrying goods with astonishing speed and certainty.

It was unique in world commerce in that it depended almost exclusively on man power. Only in parts of Africa has human labor been used so exclusively. Before men recorded their acts or methods, the horse, the camel and the ox were carrying burdens and the wheel had been invented. But horses, camels and wheels were impossible in most of what is now Canada. The canoe alone met the situation. It is still used today, but even the Indian owns an outboard motor.

Man power carried trading goods from Montreal on the St. Lawrence to Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia, was relieved only when horses took the burden for a few steps in passes through the Rockies. Human bodies carried and paddled countless tons to all parts of the northern half of the continent and, under the direction of the Nor'Westers, they did it on schedules relatively as rigid as the split-second operation of modern railroads. Unless one has paddled a canoe sixteen or eighteen hours a day and has carried that canoe and heavy burdens through swamps and over rocky ridges, he can scarcely conceive of the sustained exertion necessary. For weeks on end, no relaxation of effort was possible. Time was precious, a late spring or an early fall might not only halt lagging canoes and thus cripple the trade of a large district, but the lives of men, white and Indian, depended upon the arrival of ammunition and other supplies.

Even in the first days, the North West Company had sailing vessels on the Great Lakes, though for certainty and speed the birch bark canoe was never excelled. Other refinements were in-

roduced in the east, such as a canal with locks at Sault Ste. Marie and wagon transportation between waterways in eastern Ontario, but from Lake Superior north and west the paddle and the portage served to the end. Horses were used for some work in the mountains and on the plains but never assumed an important place in fur land transportation.

As the geographical characteristics of Canada dictated the use of the canoe in a pre-mechanical era, they also determined the size and type and divided the trade routes into two definite departments. The St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers and Lakes Huron and Superior permitted a large vessel capable of carrying five tons. It was about thirty-six feet long, with a beam of six feet and a depth of two and a half feet and weighed five hundred pounds. Four tons of goods were carried, while food and equipment added another ton. Ten men were necessary to propel such a craft and bear it and its cargo across portages.

On the large lakes and streams of the eastern route, and with no long portages, this large type was possible. But when the goods were sent westward from Lake Superior a new kind of waterway demanded a different craft. At Grand Portage there was an immediate carry of eight or nine miles, and from thence to Rainy Lake the streams were small and, in dry seasons, shallow. The same conditions existed far to the west and north at the headwaters of various river systems.

For them another size of birch bark canoe was necessary. It was thirty or more feet long, with a beam of less than five feet, a depth of two feet or less, and it could carry a ton and a half to two tons. Only four or five men were necessary for propulsion. It weighed about three hundred pounds and could be carried across a portage by two men. Such a craft was taken through waterways in which the eastern canoe was not practicable.

These "north canoes," used beyond Lake Superior, went to every corner of what is now western Canada. Materials for their manufacture were carried on horses through the Rocky Mountain passes and the birch bark floated beside the Indian's dugout on the Columbia and the Fraser. The North West Company even sent bark, cedar, gum and spruce roots by sailing vessels around the Horn to the mouth of the Columbia.

Because of the great distances of the Peace, Mackenzie, Athabasca, Fraser and Columbia Rivers from Lake Superior, it was impossible to make the round trip in one summer with any certainty of returning. Consequently the canoes from those districts went east only so far as Rainy Lake. Another factor than distance which determined this as a terminal was an abundance of canoe material, and Rainy Lake became the center of a considerable industry. Birch canoes did not last long with such driving and loading, seldom more than a season.

A third type of canoe was used by the Nor'Westers, the "light" canoe mentioned in journals. "Wintering partners" on their way from distant departments could not wait for the slower freight craft and employed canoes about twenty-five feet long. These carried only baggage and provisions, thus saving much time on portages, and were paddled by picked crews.

Inseparable from the canoe in the story of the North West Company is the voyageur, the French Canadian whose brawn and skill made possible the vast system of transportation and who has been responsible for so much of the song and color of the fur trade. Originally he was the the peasant type in the settlements of New France, the habitant. He was employed to man canoes of traders who followed Radisson and Groseillers to the Great Lakes and beyond. He went with La Verandrye and with traders who succeeded that explorer and maintained posts in the Nipigon country and out on the Saskatchewan. In the century before the fall of Montreal he had become known to many savage tribes in a vast area, he had adopted many of the ways of the Indian, and he had become the father of countless halfbreed children.

Into the wilderness he carried his songs and his gayety, his love of color in dress, his ignorance and his superstitions, all of which made him agreeable to the Indian and also permitted him the more readily to shake off any advantages civilization had provided. No other white race on this continent has reverted so quickly, easily and completely to wilderness life.

This man with a strong back and arms and a rather empty head was stranded all along the route from Montreal to the upper Saskatchewan and all through the intervening country when his nation surrendered to the British in 1760. The officers and many

of the traders who led him had departed. Communication with the St. Lawrence was cut off. Some voyageurs turned completely to the Indian life. Others went to work for the first English traders who entered the Great Lakes district.

Thus, from the beginning, the French Canadian was a part of the North West machine. He was not only ready at hand but he was the only laborer available, and as the trade of the Nor'-Westers grew, his numbers were increased by men from French settlements down the St. Lawrence. He seldom became anything except a laborer. From his ranks were recruited guides, men in charge of brigades of canoes, the most intelligent and trustworthy of the voyageurs, and also interpreters and even some clerks.

The French Canadian was almost entirely excluded from the employing class. Charles Chaboillez and Pierre de Rocheblave were partners in the North West Company in 1812. Some clerks were French Canadian. The same was true of the Hudson's Bay Company after the union in 1821. The Latin did not seem to have the energy, aggressiveness and intelligence necessary to compete with the Highlander. In the end he failed to survive.

While only an employee, the voyageur yet succeeded in coloring the whole North West movement. This was probably due to the use of French Canadians as guides, interpreters and canoemen by the first British traders. The British were newcomers in the fur trade. Everything was strange to them. It became necessary first of all to learn French that they might give orders. And when they had learned French they used French names for fur trade articles and usages.

This continued throughout the life of the North West Company. John McDonald of Garth speaks with contempt of a clerk who could not master the French language. In Nor'-Westers' journals French terms are so used as to indicate their common employment in conversation even by the Highland Scotch. The partners were called *bourgeois* by the men, though the British commonly used "gentlemen." The voyageurs were *engagés*, as they signed a contract. The chief man in a canoe was the *bouthe* and a man who paddled in the middle was a *milieu*. The French *livre* served as a unit of currency for a time. The men who operated canoes from Ottawa to Grand Portage were derisively called

*mangeurs du lard*, or pork eaters, by those in the northwest, who were known as *hommes du nord*. The Hudson's Bay Company was referred to as *les Anglois*, or *les Gens de la Baie du Nord*, their rivals as *les Gens du Nord-Ouest*. Hudson's Bay people often referred to Nor'Westers as "The French." *Régat*, a feast after a long journey, persists in Hudson's Bay usage today.

Many descriptions of the voyageur have come down to us. Travelers wrote of them, and exasperated or admiring Nor'Westers expressed themselves in journals and books. Of this ability as a canoeman, there is no doubt. He was not only trained to it but it was his one pride. John Jacob Astor was quoted as saying that he would rather have one French Canadian boatman than three Americans. Nor'Westers' journals are sprinkled with praise of their ability and of their pride in that ability and in their endurance.

Only one instance is recorded of a voyageur admitting another's superiority. When Alexander Mackenzie with his picked crew of French Canadians had started back from the Pacific, some Bella Coola Indians in a heavy dugout taught them tricks they had never heard of. Mackenzie has recorded that even his men admitted that here was something entirely beyond them.

But in the ordinary course of the day's work the French Canadian was a most valuable man. He boasted of an ability to endure hardship and terrific toil, to eat any food available or to go hungry and without sleep. His wants and ambitions were slight. Several Nor'Westers have commented on his complete happiness when his belly was full. He seemed to care about little else. Dog was his favorite meat, lynx next. Getting drunk was his chief diversion, and when drunk he was not satisfied unless fighting. Several Nor'Westers said he died in his fifties because of the exertions of his employment, but they record many who attained an exceptional age.

Opponents of the Nor'Westers called him a bully and a prize fighter and declare he was groomed and encouraged to browbeat inoffensive Hudson's Bay men. He was probably brave enough in physical encounters but he was timorous when the Indians threatened attack. He was a skilled canoeman in rapids but careless of goods entrusted to his care on portages or in camp. He



Shingle Point Post, Hudson's Bay Company, where the mouth of the Mackenzie meets the Arctic Ocean.



Barren Land Indians.





would follow a Nor'Wester who had personal courage, and he submitted to that same courage when he and his fellows threatened mutiny.

Selkirk charged that the French Canadian was a victim of the rapacious Nor'Westers, citing a French traveler who wrote that it was a practice of the company to get its men into debt and that at one time 900 were enslaved for twelve to fifteen years. Any one who has lived in the wilderness knows how valueless are the comments of the casual visitor after a superficial view. Kipling crossed Canada in a Pullman and caught the spirit of the limitless forests in a manner that astonishes men who have spent years in the land. But only one Kipling has been in Canada and "heard the wild goose call" or "smelled woodsmoke at twilight." Furthermore, Selkirk's Frenchman could hardly have been a business man, and the Nor'Westers were that. As a mere matter of practical psychology, it is hardly reasonable to believe that Scotchmen advanced fifteen years' wages to 900 men.

The French Canadian who wintered in the far northwest was employed in carrying trade goods to the Indians. As competition between the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies increased, larger numbers of such men were used. Despite the voyageur's ability to become as the Indian, it seems that he did not maintain his popularity with the natives as did the stolid Orkney Islander employed by the Hudson's Bay Company. He was inclined to make promises which he did not keep. This was reprehensible, in another, from the Indian viewpoint. An Indian's promise came under another category. Some of the charges of violence against the Nor'Westers arose from the arrogance and boasting of French Canadians in trying to overawe opponents.

The secluded historian is scandalized by the voyageur's drinking and general behavior but nothing has been advanced to indicate that he was any worse than white men have always been when separated from civilization. The lumberjack, the sailor, the miner and the cowboy, men who knew excessive toil and privations in distant places, have never been noted for restraint or sobriety after long periods in the wilderness or at sea. And this, as we have suggested in another respect, is not a matter of morals but of human nature. No writer should be permitted to pass on

such a subject until he has spent a year or more at hard labor in a region far from civilization and can furnish proof that he is reasonably young and reasonably human.

In numbers the voyageur reached as high as 1,200, probably higher in the final days of the struggle between the two companies. More than half were engaged for the summer only and employed between Montreal and the west end of Lake Superior. Though called "pork eaters" by the wintering voyageurs, their food consisted of hominy, purchased in the States, and grease. They slept beneath the big canoes. Goods and fur were baled in "pieces" of ninety pounds and a man carried at least two across a portage. In impressing others, stronger men were known to have carried as many as six pieces, a burden of 540 pounds.

The wintering voyageur, who rarely went east of Grand Portage or Fort William, was a different man. He never came in contact with civilization and was proud of it. He acquired a great many Indian wives and children, all of whom were fed by the North West Company.

In view of all the charges made against the Nor'Westers, their action in this respect has escaped notice, as have so many of their finer qualities. In reality, they established a custom which became that of the Hudson's Bay Company after union. They took care of men worn out in the service and even of aged natives. Daniel Williams Harmon, an American from Vermont who served as a clerk in the North West Company for nineteen years beginning in 1800, and who left a most instructive journal, wrote in 1809:

"Many of the natives, of both sexes, when they become old and infirm, and unable to travel with their relations, who depend upon the chase for subsistence, and are frequently moving from place to place, settle down near our fort; and it is easier for us to render them more effectual aid, than their friends could possibly afford them."

An entry in Harmon's journal in 1803: "One of our men, a Canadian, gave me his son, a lad of about twelve years of age, who I agree, in the name of the North West Company, to find and clothe, until he becomes able to earn something more."

The younger Henry, at Fort Vermillion on the upper Sas-

katchewan in 1809, lists thirty-six men, twenty-seven women and sixty-seven children, a total of 130 persons, housed and fed by the North West Company at Fort Vermillion on the upper Saskatchewan in 1809. The numbers of such dependents became so great that the North West Company, according to Harmon, established a rule that men should not take an Indian woman but one of mixed blood. Harmon says the burden of caring for many families left by partners on retiring was the cause, but he probably refers also to the French Canadians. The editor of Harmon's journal wrote that North West Company clerks subscribed several thousand dollars a few years before the union of 1821 for a school for half-breed children at Fort William or Rainy Lake.

The greatest number of half-breeds resulting from French Canadian participation in the fur trade was found in the plains country, where the provision posts were situated. In the final days of the struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company these people of mixed blood played a significant part, and many years later their resentment of white settlers caused much trouble for the Canadian government. They had become a small nation, neither white nor Indian, living on buffalo. Their annual hunts were conducted with a precision and discipline that astonished military officers.

Alexander Henry the Elder made the statement that the French Canadian's ability to subsist on the only food that could be provided seemed to insure to him, and his employers, a monopoly of the fur trade. It is probably true that the competence of the voyageur as well as the energy of the Highlanders contributed to the phenomenal success of the North West movement. We have already learned how Henry and the Frobishers pushed on into the Churchill River country in 1775 without food. Even when operations of the Nor'Westers became well organized, the same condition existed. Alexander Mackenzie wrote that he had arrived at Fort Chipewyan with ninety to one hundred men and no provisions for their sustenance.

In the far north fish was the only food, caught with nets stretched beneath the ice, and winter fishing was accompanied by excessive hardship. Salt was later found in some parts of the northwest but, as a rule, was lacking. Vegetables were unknown on the Mackenzie. Wild fowl were to be had for short periods in

spring and fall. Mackenzie noted that men wintering on the Peace, Saskatchewan and Assiniboine Rivers, who lived exclusively on venison or buffalo, had a less healthy appearance than his fish eaters in the north, where, he said, scurvy was unknown.

Vegetables and, later, grains were grown on the southern prairies, along Peace River and in British Columbia and Oregon, but by far the greater part of fur land subsisted on fish and meat. In the buffalo country the larger posts were provision depots rather than trading centers. In carrying goods to the posts and fur down to Lake Superior, it was necessary to use a concentrated food or there would have been no room in the canoes for anything except supplies. Pemmican met this need. Vast quantities of it were sent from the plains to the main transport routes, and on this the voyageurs were fed in their summer work. Eventually this practice was an important factor in the final and bitter struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company.

The buffalo country was a land of plenty for the French Canadian, whose chief concern seems to have been an abundance of food. The younger Henry tells of abandoning a post one spring when more than 500 quarters of buffalo meat were left in the ice houses. But in the Nipigon, Churchill and Nelson River, Athabasca and Mackenzie districts food was often scarce and many men and their families starved to death. Yet even under such conditions, the French Canadian seems to have been a cheerful workman if he were competently handled.

Despite his superstition and ignorance, his love of drinking and fighting, despite his unreliability in caring for property or dealing with Indians, the French Canadian was exactly the man for the job in the North West Company. With a brave and enterprising leader whom he half feared and half admired, he could perform wonders in exploratory work. Mackenzie's voyages are an outstanding example of this.

Privations endured and tasks accomplished in the daily routine were even more remarkable. In such cases much depended on leadership, and the Highlanders were invariably adequate. Their personal courage was seldom wanting and they were born to command. A single Nor'Wester isolated with a large crew of voyageurs did not hesitate to assert himself or enforce his commands. Even

the gentle David Thompson recorded: "May 30, 1809. Martin insolent; dislocated my thumb in thrashing him."

But this was not often necessary. The French Canadian, for all his skill and ability to endure privations and terrific toil, was helpless without a leader. Largely by chance and circumstances, the Scot and the Latin were brought together in the fur trade. It is difficult to conceive of any other combination which could have achieved such marked success.

Like liquor and the so-called evils of the fur trade, the voyageur was an instrument of competition. After the union of the two companies he became an expense and was eliminated. The need to visit the Indian camps and buy fur in the winter no longer existed, nor did the need of long journeys to Montreal. His summer work was given to Indians.

But the spirit of the voyageur persisted. Fiction writers carried him on and enhanced his station in life. The Hudson's Bay novel of today is peopled by Pierre, Louis, Michel and François. In real life he has had little part in the fur trade for nearly a century.

## CHAPTER XXVII

Of the Nor'Wester himself, history has managed to leave a distorted picture. Accusations of his opponents, prejudices assumed by later writers and vivid sketches by travelers who saw him only in certain phases, all have contributed to the misconceptions existing today.

Then, too, the common picture is more romantic. It fits better in the usual idea of the north and of fur trading, of wide and distant places and stirring events. We like to have our cowboys, lumberjacks, sailors and miners with a bit of swagger, with free-spending ways and a manner suggesting the wide spaces from which they emerge, and there is more of a thrill in thinking of a Nor'Wester as part brigand, a man in whom is much of the ruthlessness of the savage land where he won quick and questionable fortune.

Half wild and gayly clad voyageurs singing as they paddle their master across a spruce-rimmed lake to scenes of revelry in the huge hall at Fort William, bacchanals in the Beaver Club in Montreal, pitiless attacks at the head of savage bands of half-breeds on innocent settlers and on the equally innocent and virtuous Hudson's Bay Company—it is all true, perhaps, and yet very, very far from the truth.

Washington Irving has contributed much to the popular picture with his descriptions of the "lords of the lakes and forests," and it can be argued that, as a young man, he saw them in the flesh and sat at their famous boards and listened to their tales. He was entranced by the romance and drama of their lives and he always regretted that he did not avail himself of invitations to partake of their experiences.

But he wrote of them many years afterward, and he wrote that they "have passed away," leaving the impression that their iniquities had run them to earth, that the fruits of such a life were oblivion. Whether from Irving or from bitterness engendered

before 1821, that impression has come down to us. It has tainted history. Yet the best of those men went on to build upon the wreckage of the final struggle and to give us, in the Hudson's Bay Company, as fine an example of justice and integrity and loyalty as the world has produced.

The North West Company did not die and its men did not vanish in 1821. They went on to real glory and fine achievement. Only the name was changed. Historians have not stinted themselves in praising the Hudson's Bay Company in the years following 1821, but when they said that the North West Company was "absorbed" they ignored the fact that it contributed capital on an equal basis but more men than the Hudson's Bay Company. They have failed to discover the significant truth that it was upon the system and method and loyalty and spirit of the North West Company that the greatness of the united Company was based.

This is not rhetoric. One need only follow the careers of Nor'Westers in the newly formed Hudson's Bay Company or compare its development and attitude and success with those of the North West Company to learn how true the statement is. And when one has done this he is faced with the conclusion that the organization which produced such men, which was governed by such men, could not have been composed of brigands and revelers and ruthless wilderness tyrants, as history would have us believe.

But the truth does not lie alone in events subsequent to 1821. It is available in the journals and letters left by those men and their predecessors for forty years or more and in the whole series of events preceding union. The glory of the Hudson's Bay Company did not arise from work of Colen at York Factory and the others who fought among themselves for the meager returns of the muskrat country while the victorious Nor'Westers built up a monopoly in the rich Peace, Athabasca and British Columbia districts. It did not rise from the frantic, beaten plea of the "Gentlemen Adventurers" in London to the British government in 1809, when the Company was on the verge of bankruptcy. The name bestowed by Charles II was continued, and little else.

We have given glimpses of several Nor'Westers, and it is regrettable that we cannot give more than fleeting pictures. Volumes have been filled with their letters and journals and descrip-

tions of life in the "Indian country." It is equally regrettable that no similar literature has come down to us from the Hudson's Bay Company before 1821. If it ever existed, it has been destroyed or is still buried in the Company's vaults and trading posts. In recent years some of this has come to light, notably the journals of Kelsey, Hendry, Cocking and Peter Fidler, but we need much more to complete the picture.

With the exception of Samuel Hearne's book, which stands alone in the known literature produced in the old Hudson's Bay Company, we fail to find in the few examples available the outstanding personalities portrayed in the Nor'Westers' writings. In view of the type of men opposed to one another in the long years of commercial rivalry, of the methods and spirit and achievements of the two companies, the conclusion is inescapable that the Montreal concern produced the predominant characters of pre-union times.

Direct comparison would be unfair because of the disparity in available literary legacies of the two companies. Aside from Hearne, we get no illuminating self-revelation from the Hudson's Bay ranks. But in Alexander Mackenzie, Roderick Mackenzie, David Thompson, George Keith, Dr. John McLoughlin, Sir James Douglas, James Leith, Daniel Williams Harmon and Peter Skene Ogden we find a type of man almost wholly lacking in the old chartered company before 1810. And, what is more, after contributing to the success of the Nor'Westers, they went on, with the exception of Alexander Mackenzie, who died, and David Thompson, who had retired long before union, to add luster to the Hudson's Bay Company after 1821.

As has been indicated earlier, the North West Company movement was distinctly of the New World and hence subject to condemnation on the part of the British writer. It was the first outburst of individualism, of unrestricted effort in commerce. Even today, after more than a century and a half, the Old World cannot comprehend quick accumulation of a fortune, the loss thereof and the making of another. It cannot understand the careless attitude of men toward wealth they have won, or realize the inevitable influence of a vast wilderness upon men's superficial behavior.



Hence there was something iniquitous in the Nor'Westers' swift success, even though it were founded on courage and vigor, and something reprehensible in his behavior upon return to civilization. But this, as we have said before, is not a matter of morals but of human nature. Red blooded men were required to conquer the west and north, and red blooded men never frequented soda fountains upon emerging from a year or more in the wilderness.

Alexander the Elder, it will be remembered, was in the west for fifteen years without returning to Montreal. David Thompson left London in 1784 and did not see even a hamlet until he went to Montreal twenty-six years later. Alexander Mackenzie remained in the northwest long enough to bemoan the fate of a man forced to spend his time in such a country. Daniel Williams Harmon did not go east of Lake Superior for nineteen years.

None of these men was known as a roisterer. They were quite the opposite. Henry and Mackenzie were able to step from the wilderness directly into drawing rooms of London and Paris and be lionized. Thompson and Harmon had religious scruples against drinking. But the average Nor'Wester, after a year in some lonely, distant fort, perhaps with no English-speaking companion, after privations and escape from death in massacre or rapids or blizzard, leaped whole-heartedly into the week or two of good fellowship and conviviality awaiting each summer in Grand Portage or, later, Fort William.

No wonder a great hall was built in which a hundred or more could dine. No wonder French vintages were welcomed after a year or two of the "high wines," a raw grain alcohol, of the Indian trade. Why should any one criticize when in a few days those men would turn back to the dreariness and emptiness of the long and lonely winter nights of the north? It was only an excess of animal spirits when the cowboy shot up the town after two or three months on the range, but it became an indication of lawlessness in the historian's eyes when a North West partner or clerk gave vent to his joy upon again being with his fellows in the security and ease of headquarters.

Likewise, the Nor'Wester is disparaged because of the large numbers of half-breed children he left in fur land, though why, of all white men who have led the way westward across this conti-

ment, he should be selected for special condemnation is not clearly understood. Again we encounter a question of the inevitable nature of man rather than one of morals. The tragedy of the half-caste has followed the white race into every corner of the world, and the moralist and the historian have never understood how poignant that tragedy has been in some instances, or of how little real consequence it was in the great majority of cases. The Nor'-Wester was no less human than any others would have been in his place.

The traveler who wrote of his experiences in the wilds of America rarely got past Montreal and there he encountered the Nor'-Wester in his moments of relaxation. Quick wealth always manifests itself, and the fur trader, returned from long years in a land which even today exacts so much in hardihood and courage and privation, quite naturally expressed his ebullient spirits.

The Beaver Club was an inevitable outgrowth of his life and character. It was founded in 1785 by the pioneers of the movement, who exultantly chose as a motto, "Fortitude in distress." Nineteen men composed the original group. All had "wintered" in the northwest, and that became a qualification demanded of all new members. A single blackball excluded a candidate but any distinguished visitor was welcomed at its sumptuous, and perhaps pretentious, table. Members wore large gold medals. The rules provided these regular toasts: "The Mother of All Saints," "The King," "The Fur Trade," "Voyageurs' Wives and Children," "Absent Members."

Individual members entertained as elaborately, especially Joseph Frobisher, Sir Alexander Mackenzie and William McGillivray. The last two shared the same house. One visitor wrote that "never place had so won, in so short a time, upon my affections," as Montreal. This traveler, in a ten-day stay, was permitted to eat only breakfast at his inn. Another, describing a Mackenzie-McGillivray dinner beginning, as was the custom, at four in the afternoon, said that after the married men had retired, "We now began in right earnest and true highland style, and by four o'clock in the morning, the whole of us had arrived at such a degree of perfection, that we could all give the war whoop as well as Mackenzie and McGillivray."

Revelry did not consume their time. Nor'Westers were leaders in business as well as society, and several, Sir Alexander Mackenzie among them, were members of Parliament. Others attained distinction in several ways, and their descendants have figured prominently in Canadian life. Roderick Mackenzie, in addition to being a legislator and an officer in the militia, was a member of the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec and of the American Antiquarian Society, and a fellow of the Royal Society of Northern Antiquarians of Copenhagen. Simon Fraser, British Columbia explorer, is said to have been offered knighthood but declined it because of the expense.

Sir Alexander Mackenzie retired to Scotland, where he married and purchased the estate of Avoch in Rosshire. Simon McTavish, "Le Premier," was building a mansion when he died in 1804. William McGillivray, friendly rival of Roderick Mackenzie on Churchill River in 1786, paid £20,000 for an estate in Scotland.

The real nature of the Nor'Wester, as expressed in his books, his journals and his letters, has rarely been made known, and it is in a careful reading of these that one finds the strongest refutation of charges made against him. Alexander Mackenzie's iron will could not escape notice, though his vision and keen, aggressive business mind have been overlooked. Alexander Henry the Younger left us fifteen years of stark realism through which he stalked with only infrequent bursts of impassioned expression. Daniel Williams Harmon, the Vermont Yankee, maintained his steady, upright and lovable way for two decades. Roderick Mackenzie was the student and, though he achieved success and fortune in the fur trade, one suspects that his heart was with his books. John McDonald of Garth, a fire-brand of a Highlander who, tracing his line to an ancestor who scorned Noah's help and built an ark of his own, emerged from a tempestuous youth peppered with challenges to combat and became a valued fur trader. David Thompson, the Welch geographer, wrote in the family Bible upon the death of a small daughter that she was a dear little thing, "too gentle for this world."

They tell a great deal, those letters and journals. They were written by lonely men hungering for companionship. They reveal much because they were written without thought of publication.

And they leave one with a feeling of having made some new and charming and very worthwhile friends.

The Nor'Wester loved books. This is scarcely reconcilable with the common picture of him, but it is nevertheless true, and that literary taste was handed down to the Hudson's Bay Company and fostered through succeeding generations. So far as the record makes known, Peter Fidler was the only Hudson's Bay man before 1821 who had a passion for reading. When he died in 1822 he left a library of 500 volumes and until recent years some of his books were to be found in Winnipeg or in Norway House.

But the North West Company, though there is no direct statement to that effect, must have provided for its men. As early as 1786 Alexander Mackenzie began writing to his cousin Roderick of books read or to be forwarded, and a few years later, on his way to England, he took time to drop a note telling of an English nobleman with whom he was traveling and whose books Roderick would have enjoyed.

Roderick Mackenzie was the literary leader of the Nor'Westers. The statement is common that he wrote the sketch of the fur trade in Sir Alexander's book, though there is no proof of this. He is probably responsible, however, for the installation of the library in Fort Chipewyan when he established that far northern post. Thirty years later Ferdinand Wentzel wrote that the collection of books had almost vanished, but this was near the end of the final struggle with the Hudson's Bay Company, and Nor'Westers had little time for reading.

From Fort Chipewyan these books went up the Peace and across into British Columbia. Harmon speaks of them often. He commented once that only a fifth of a fur trader's time was necessary for his work, the remainder being his own. "Ignorant Canadians furnish little society. Happily for me, I have lifelong friends, my books, that will never abandon me, until I first neglect them."

Despite the popular conception of a trader being busy with traps, few furs were taken by the partners and clerks. The Highlander had a sense of class, of the necessity of a leader maintaining his position. This has been handed down through the Hudson's Bay Company. Not many years ago the writer of this volume, when living at a Hudson's Bay post, was not permitted to

carry a stick of wood or a pail of water. The impression that the white race was in command and above menial tasks was always preserved. When Nor'Westers, and Hudson's Bay men after union, did a bit of trapping about a post, it was more the result of boredom than anything else, and a means of getting exercise.

For business reasons, the North West Company maintained a winter express to carry orders and reports from every post down to the Great Lakes and Montreal, thus supplementing the summer fur brigades as a means of communication. Partners and clerks made use of it for their personal correspondence, and it is through the letters they wrote to one another that we best understand them.

It is not necessary to prove the Nor'Wester's personal courage. He did that when he flung the fur trade across the continent. A weakling could not have remained in the north. Especially in the early days, the trader's courage was often tested. As a rule, only curt references are made to such incidents in their journals. The plains and British Columbia were the danger zones. In 1818 Harmon, then on the Fraser River, wrote: "The natives had concocted a plan to massacre us all; but I discovered it, and kept my people on their guard."

At Stuart's Lake, in 1811, Harmon made this entry: "I found it necessary to chastise the chief of the village with considerable severity. He is the first Indian that I have ever struck during a residency of eleven years in this savage country." Harmon's action aroused the village, but he talked the band out of its hostile intentions and made a firm friend of the chief.

No other method was open to the Nor'Westers. Rarely did they have physical force sufficient to subdue unruly natives. Personal courage alone saved their lives and the posts. Alexander the Younger affords a splendid example of this quality. He was often in danger but his policy seems to have been one of hitting first. At Pembina, in 1804, he wrote: "I took a mare from an X Y Indian in payment of a debt. This affair came near being attended with serious consequences, as the fellow was a known villain and a chief of the X Y making. I some time ago gave him a cruel beating, and bunged up his eyes, so that he could not see for several days. He has ever since been bent on revenge, although he richly

deserved the ill usage I gave him, having attempted to stab me with my own knife."

This gives us an example of what led to the few cases of violence in the rivalry between the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies previous to 1810. The feeling against the X Y Company was far more bitter, but in Henry's efforts to collect a debt we can better understand how an aggressive Highlander might come in conflict with a Hudson's Bay man.

As for this treatment of the Indian, only the sentimentalist could object. Among the Ojibwas of western Minnesota no other method could have insured the lives of the whites. On leaving that district in 1808, Henry wrote:

"This is the last Saulteur (Ojibwa) establishment I have made for Red River, and I here bid adieu to the tribes with whom I have passed 16 long winters. During this time I have experienced every trouble, danger and inconvenience which attends the management of affairs among that turbulent nation. I have frequently been fired at by them and have had several narrow escapes for my life. But I am happy to say they have never pillaged me to the value of a needle."

Many years later, Governor Simpson, the greatest executive the fur trade has known, wrote: "I have made it my duty to examine the nature and the character of the Indians, and however repugnant it may be to our feelings, I am convinced they must be ruled with a rod of iron."

It was the policy of the Nor'Westers, and it was the only policy that would have permitted a handful of white men to scatter through a vast wilderness inhabited by large numbers of savages. It does not substantiate charges that the Nor'Westers mistreated the Indians. They did not, for the Nor'Wester was never a fool. But his Highland courage carried him through situations which, if not handled fearlessly, would have resulted in loss of property and lives. The American Indian has always been the subject of maudlin sentimentality, but the fur trader alone understood his real character. The method of the Nor'Westers, which later became that of the Hudson's Bay Company, resulted in the finest relationship of the white man and a savage people to be found in the world's history.

Not all Nor'Westers were readers or writers of charming letters. The life inevitably drew the physical type, and it provided an outlet for activity, especially on the plains. There buffalo hunting was the chief diversion. Fishing was never a sport but a matter of grim necessity. Hunting was usually done by Indians or voyageurs but many partners and clerks enjoyed using a rifle or fowling piece.

Monotony was the chief characteristic of life in a fur post, despite the possibility of Indian attack and the necessity for constant watchfulness of rival traders. In winter, with long nights, the hours passed slowly. "I spend the greater part of my time in reading and writing," Harmon noted in 1803. "Now and then I take a ride on horseback."

That leisure, and that loneliness, made or broke a man. "If we do not, with such opportunity, improve our standings," Harmon wrote, "the fault must be our own; for there are few posts which are not tolerably supplied with books."

But, whether student or restless seeker of excitement in physical action, the Nor'Wester was first of all a fur trader. The Company and its interests took precedence over all else. Loyalty was not only inherent but exacting. It drove men to hardship and even death. Some who exerted themselves the most lived to an advanced age. Others suffered the consequences of privation. If they spurred on the voyageurs, they were more demanding of themselves. In 1819, when he was fifty-five years old, Sir Alexander Mackenzie wrote to Roderick of his serious ill health, "consequences of my suffering in the northwest. The great doctor Hamilton of Edinburgh calls it a shake of the constitution." He died within a year.

It is a most significant phrase, "a shake of the constitution." It explains so much of North West success and Hudson's Bay failure. Half a continent could not be explored and opened to trade in a few years by men who spared themselves.

But a spirit must animate a body that is wrecked in achievement, and that spirit the Nor'Westers had in abundance. It is a force that has given life to all great enterprises, and it was peculiar to the frontier of this continent. The old time lumberjack in Wisconsin and Michigan took pride in three things,

working, fighting and drinking. The cowman expended vast energy in the same manner. Both were remarkable for a blind, unswerving loyalty, and, working, fighting or drinking, they expressed not only themselves but that quenchless ardor of youth to which America gave opportunity.

The Nor'Wester, faced always by the need of achievement, thrown upon his own personal resources, found a more concrete object for his loyalty. He played hard, fought hard and sometimes drank hard, and he gave unstintingly of himself to his company. That company became something more to him than a commercial organization. It represented his own vaulting spirit, was a brotherhood of endeavor, and when the final struggle came he hurled himself into it with a fierce and unconquerable energy.

From the white heat of that struggle his spirit emerged to imbue the Hudson's Bay Company and lift it to its first greatness. That spirit marched on through the years, sobered and softened by conflict, fierce only on occasion, to give the world one of its finest examples of loyalty and devotion and service. Irving was wrong. The Nor'Westers did not pass away.



## CHAPTER XXVIII

No one seems to have speculated on what would have been the development of the fur trade in Canada had not Lord Selkirk entered the situation. In the first decade of the nineteenth century the North West Company rose to its greatest power. In that same period the Hudson's Bay Company faced a serious situation. In 1804, according to the testimony of Edward Ellice, it was willing to sell out to the North West Company. Five years later it was desperate. Napoleon's blockade had prevented the sale of fur. It made a frantic plea to the government for a loan, and was refused.

Joseph Colen, the chief at York Factory, who hindered trade extension, was removed in 1798. It is probable that a better class of traders was introduced about this time. At least the Company began to demand more effectively that its men in the field make an effort to reach the rich districts held exclusively by the Nor'-Westers. Peter Fidler, who with David Thompson studied surveying under Philip Turnor at Cumberland House, was at last released for this work. In 1799 he was sent to Lac La Biche, above Edmonton, where he established a post. The next year he built Chesterfield House at the junction of the South Saskatchewan and Red Deer Rivers, in the hostile Blackfeet country, and remained there two years.

In 1802 the governor at York Factory took the long delayed step and attempted to reach Lake Athabasca, where the Nor'-Westers had been firmly established since Peter Pond's arrival in 1778. London had been demanding such action since Turnor made his survey of the lake in 1791, but this was the Hudson's Bay Company's first attempt to establish itself outside the chartered territory, although Fidler's post on Lac La Biche was a step of a few miles across the height of land into the upper Athabasca basin.

This is an interesting point that historians have completely overlooked. Despite the stipulation of the charter that discoveries be made, despite the pressure brought to bear in London by private individuals and government, despite the Company's own claims, 132 years elapsed before the Hudson's Bay pushed past the boundaries blindly laid down by Charles II. But by this time the extent of the continent was fairly well known, and the Hudson's Bay was only following the North West Company.

Peter Fidler was selected for this new and important task. It was important. North West ascendancy threatened the very existence of the Hudson's Bay. Lake Athabasca was the gateway to the Peace, the Mackenzie and Great Slave Lake. At one time the Nor'Westers were getting more than 400 packs of fur from these districts.

Following the Nor'Westers up the Churchill and across the long Methye portage, Fidler reached Lake Athabasca and crossed to the north side, where he built Nottingham House. He did more than that. He sent Thomas Swain up the Peace, where Swain built Mansfield House.

Athabasca is the district which, historians have assured us, still sent much fur to Fort Churchill, the Indians making the long journey as they had for nearly a century. These were the Indians who had known the Hudson's Bay for generations and had no faith in the Nor'Westers.

But in January Swain abandoned his post up the Peace because the Indians would not hunt meat for him. He was starved out and rejoined Fidler, who obtained *seven packs of fur* that winter.

Fidler remained. In 1803 he sent Swain down Slave River to build Chiswick House twenty-five miles from Great Slave Lake. This was an important achievement for the Hudson's Bay Company. After thirty-one years it had connected up with Hearne's journey. It had a post farther toward the northwest than ever before. But in the spring of 1804 Fidler and Swain together could send out no more than Fidler had in the previous year.

Fidler must have been a persistent trader, and as such he is unique in early Hudson's Bay annals. He would not quit, and in the summer of 1804 he sent Swain to Great Slave Lake, where a Hudson's Bay post was built still farther away. But in 1805 Fidler

and Swain could get together only seven packs of fur to send out to York Factory. Swain contributed four and Fidler three.

In 1805 Fidler went out to York and, still dogged, returned. His journal says: "The French had destroyed our garden, stolen our canoes, made a house to watch us, and put two tents close to our house, not two yards from it, to keep every Indian away. Got here this summer 80 M B (made beaver, the Hudson's Bay unit of exchange in trading with Indians) and traded the dry meat of eight moose, but at very heavy expense."

That is the last entry in Peter Fidler's journal, which was unearthed in 1912 in York Factory by J. B. Tyrrell. It is known that in the spring of 1806 he abandoned the posts on Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake. The North West Company was again in sole possession of one of the richest districts in fur land.

Meanwhile the North West Company not only held the Athabasca country but it was pushing on across the Rocky Mountains. Beaver were becoming scarce east of the continental divide. This was not caused, as has been charged, by the devastating methods of the Nor'Westers. It was partly due to competition and its attendant evils, and also to an epidemic among the beaver which only one writer has recorded. Elliott Coues found a reference to it in the story of John Tanner, an American boy who was captured by Indians and spent his life among them, much of it beside Alexander Henry the Younger on Red River in Minnesota.

In 1804, Tanner said, he found many dead and dying animals, and "since that year the beaver have never been so plentiful in the country of Red River and Hudson Bay, as they used formerly to be."

Later the North West Company felt this scarcity to such an extent it made a vigorous attempt to get the entire trade of the Columbia Basin, believing it could not go on without expansion. This, probably more than anything else, was responsible for the loss of the Oregon-Washington district to John Jacob Astor and his Pacific Fur Company.

The plight of the Hudson's Bay Company was serious. Not only had it paid no dividends for several years but it was confined by its own inertia to the original chartered lands, where the beaver epidemic was most felt, and throughout that territory

it suffered severe competition from the North West Company. Its stock dropped from 250 per cent to fifty. Sir Alexander Mackenzie saw the opportunity and tried to act upon it. The confident Nor'-Westers evidently agreed at first, and then, as 1810 approached, saw no necessity to buy control of their opponents. As the situation existed at the moment, they had won. Governors of Hudson's Bay posts on the Bay were reporting to London that the interior trade had been cut off.

At that point Lord Selkirk hurled himself and a wholly foreign idea and condition into the fur trade, and what had been commercial rivalry burst into a bitter struggle that culminated in warfare on a small scale and eventual union of the opponents.

So foreign are Selkirk and his idea to the whole story of the fur trade, the distant and dispassionate observer is struck by a sense of their unimportance, and even of their unreality. Yet both are very real, and their effect was very important. Selkirk and his money brought new life to the dying Hudson's Bay Company. They brought the first bitterness into a strictly commercial rivalry and spread the effects of that bitterness back through half a century. They expressed the last effort of Old World thought and method to implant themselves on this continent.

Lord Selkirk was thirty years old when Alexander Mackenzie's book appeared in 1801 and he was at once interested, not in the fur trade but in what has since become one of the world's chief granaries. And he was not particularly interested in grain but in giving poor people of the British Isles, especially the Highlanders of Scotland, an opportunity for happiness in raising it. A Lowlander, he had been touched by the distress of his countrymen in the north and recognized their need of land.

In 1802 Selkirk attempted to interest the British government in a scheme to colonize what is now Manitoba with Highland Scotch. He made several recommendations as to changes in the conduct of the fur trade, obviously suggested by Mackenzie's book, and observed that the "greatest impediment to a colony would be the Hudson's Bay monopoly."

But the British government was not in favor of emigration, and the next year when Selkirk attempted to send Scotch colonists to the Red River through Hudson Bay the government

stopped the ships. These went instead to Prince Edward Island, where the enterprise was successful. After establishing his people in their new home, Lord Selkirk went on to Montreal.

Being a distinguished nobleman, he was well received by the Nor'Westers and entertained at the Beaver Club and in their homes. But he asked questions, innumerable questions, about the fur trade. Some Nor'Westers, with the fur trader's ready suspicion of any stranger, did not like these questions and warned their fellows against Selkirk. But Selkirk was known only as a philanthropist and the answers were forthcoming.

In 1805, after his return from England, Selkirk published a book, "Observations Upon the Present State of the Highlands of Scotland with a View of the Causes and Probable Consequences of Emigration." He met Mackenzie again. Perhaps the Nor'-Wester, still interested in his ambitious schemes for a huge monopoly stretching across America, saw a chance to enlist a wealthy man. At least they entered into some sort of an agreement to purchase stock in the Hudson's Bay Company.

But if Mackenzie were interested in a trade monopoly, Selkirk thought only of getting control of the Hudson's Bay that it might give him a huge tract of land on Red River for his colonization scheme. He was aided in this by his marriage in 1807 to a daughter of James Colville, one of the largest shareholders in the Hudson's Bay Company. On November 16, 1808, Selkirk invested £800 in the Company's stock and Mackenzie £742.

Evidently this joint purchasing continued and it terminated in a quarrel. Sir Alexander Mackenzie wrote of it to his cousin Roderick from London in April, 1812. Following a reference to Selkirk, he said:

"I have finally settled with that Lord. After having prepared a bill to carry him before the Lord Chancellor, it was proposed to my solicitor by the solicitor of his Lordship that one-third of the stock that was purchased on joint account before I went to America, amounting to 4,700 pounds, and the balance of cash in his Lordship's hands, belonging to me, should be given up to me; of this I accepted, though I might have obliged his Lordship to make over to me one-third of the whole purchase made by him in this stock, which, at one time, I was determined to do, having

been encouraged thereto by the House of Suffolk Lane and countenanced by that of Mark Lane (North West Company agents in London). But these houses thought it prudent to desist from any further purchases."

Senator Masson, who preserved and published this letter, thus gives the remainder of it: "Then Sir Alexander states that by a verbal understanding with Mr. McGillivray his purchases of the Hudson's Bay stock belonged to the North West Company, and that, if McGillivray himself had been there, a sum of thirty thousand pounds might have been invested in that stock, 'all which Lord Selkirk purchased, and if he persists in his present scheme, it will be the dearest he yet made.

" 'He will put the North West Company to a greater expense than you seem to apprehend, and, had the Company sacrificed 20,000 pounds, which might have secured a preponderance of the stock of the Hudson's Bay Company, it would have been money well spent.' "

Whatever the basis of that quarrel or the nature of their agreement, Selkirk gained control of the Hudson's Bay Company. But a point in his operations that has not been brought out is that more than a year before he asked the Company for a grant of land for his colonization scheme he took steps to rehabilitate the organization as a fur trading enterprise. No one has ever questioned the sincerity or philanthropy of Lord Selkirk in his efforts to provide land for settlers, and there is no intent to do so here. And quite naturally, after investing much money in the Hudson's Bay Company when it was close to bankruptcy, he wished to see that investment protected. But almost at once he brought about the most revolutionary step in the history of the "Gentlemen Adventurers." Fort governors and traders and even laborers were *given one-half of the net profits*, and a former North West Company clerk was placed in a supervisory capacity in London.

We get the first glimpse of this clerk in the reminiscences of John McDonald of Garth, who was in charge of the North West post at Ile à la Crosse in 1804. "We had a post also at Green Lake under Mr. Colin Robertson, who afterward behaved somewhat amiss. I discharged him, and he joined Lord Selkirk's party."

Whatever Robertson's faults, McDonald made what proved to be a serious mistake, for it was on Robertson's advice that the Hudson's Bay Company changed its policy, abolished the premiums to traders which had so retarded its progress, and adopted a plan which, in effect, was like that of its successful rivals. For the first time in 140 years, Hudson's Bay servants had a direct interest in the success of the Company.

When Robertson was discharged by McDonald, he went down to Montreal, where he met Selkirk and told him of the vast fertile land in the west, and particularly of Red River. Later, when Selkirk had begun to buy Hudson's Bay stock, he took Robertson to London and on January 3, 1810, the ex-Nor'Wester appeared before the Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company and told them how a successful fur trading concern should be operated. This was soon after the futile attempt to borrow £60,000 from the government, at a time when the Company faced ruin, but the "Old Worthies" had not yet been ousted by Selkirk and did not like the advice. They turned it down.

By the end of the year Selkirk controlled the Hudson's Bay Company and in December, 1810, when Robertson again outlined a progressive policy, it was adopted. Not only were men in the field given half the net profits but an agent was sent to Montreal to employ French Canadian voyageurs to take the places of the stolid Orkney Islanders, who for several years had refused to join the service. They had done more than refuse. A few months previously 250 of them had quit the Bay and returned to Scotland.

The exact reason for the complete change in policy is not definitely known. Selkirk had control by this time, and he had great faith in Robertson and in his own academic knowledge of the fur trade. Whether the Company would have taken a similar step without Selkirk can never be determined. It could not get more laborers and those in the field were coming home in large numbers. Governors of the three big Bay forts reported that trade in the interior had practically ceased.

No wonder the Nor'Westers would not listen to Sir Alexander Mackenzie's advice that they buy control in the rival company. They had won. They knew it. Vigor and skill and unwavering

zeal had conquered. The Hudson's Bay had failed miserably to establish itself in the Mackenzie basin or across the Rockies. It had failed to hold its own within chartered territory. Of all the confident, exultant Nor'Westers, Sir Alexander Mackenzie alone foresaw where the philanthropic schemes of "that Lord" would lead.

When it was too late, the North West Company flung itself into action. Six members purchased Hudson's Bay stock and when, on February 6, 1811, Lord Selkirk asked the Hudson's Bay Company to grant him 110,000 square miles of land in what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, North Dakota and Minnesota, they prepared to make vigorous protest. But Selkirk was in the saddle, dictating the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company. Selkirk's enthusiasm for a philanthropic idea and Selkirk's wealth brought new life to the "Gentlemen Adventurers." They were the "Gentlemen Adventurers" no more, however. They had become the tool of a resolute nobleman, an instrument of Utopia. The last vestige of the Company founded by Charles II and his friends was wiped out.

When Lord Selkirk laid his colonization plan before the Hudson's Bay Committee in February, the Committee decided that so important a matter should be submitted to the shareholders, which was done on May 30, 1811. This gave the Nor'Westers opportunity to fight the proposal, which they did by propaganda and, at the meeting, by many objections. They had a voice, but only a few votes. Selkirk won. He got his land, and Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Edward Ellice and the others saw a reborn Hudson's Bay plant a colony squarely across the path between Montreal and their posts in the west and north.

It meant the end. Those Nor'Westers knew it. After two centuries of uninterrupted possession, the fur trader was faced at last by the person he feared the most—the settler, the homesteader, the man with a plow.



## CHAPTER XXIX

As a preliminary to his Red River colonization scheme, Lord Selkirk submitted the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company to a leading firm of barristers for an opinion as to its validity. The legal lights told him the charter gave the Company power to sell land within the stipulated boundaries. Later the North West Company sought the advice of another legal firm and was assured that the charter did not give the Hudson's Bay Company a right to dispose of land so far from the Bay, or even give exclusive trade privileges. In 1804 it had been told the same thing, in effect, by another firm. It is significant that this question was not carried to court, but history has spoken of the "high legal authority" which upheld Selkirk.

The Nor'Westers, however, had long before developed only scorn for the charter. They had now been trading within the sacred territory for forty years and the Hudson's Bay Company had not taken legal action to enforce a monopoly. But the Montreal men had their own legal contention. For many years they had claimed that, as successors to the French after the conquest of Canada, they had a prior right in the interior of the continent, French traders having explored and operated there.

The real basis of the North West viewpoint was human rather than legal, however. While that vast territory may have been given to the Hudson's Bay Company by Charles II, the "Gentlemen Adventurers" had never explored or occupied it. The Nor'-Westers arrived, and in a surprisingly short time they explored every foot of it, built trading posts by the score and greatly developed British commerce. A king long dead may have presented the land by questionable legal procedure, but the North West Company had *earned* it.

There lay the foundation of their wrath. They had devoted their lives to searching out that vast wilderness, to building up an organization. Now, in the whim of a nobleman, in an action

*Entirely foreign to thought and principle on the American continent, they saw themselves robbed of the fruits of their toil. Their instinct to defense was natural and understandable. The vigor and nature of that defense were only in accord with the spirit necessary to conquer so great a wilderness.*

This feeling on the part of the Nor'Westers was intensified in the case of invasion of territory outside the boundaries of Rupert's Land. The Athabasca, Peace and Mackenzie districts were their own. They alone had discovered them, built posts and traded in them. More than once they had asked the British government for exclusive privileges, and when they were denied these as a reward for accomplishment, they resented the more a dubious charter that had not been earned nearly a century and a half after it was granted. Later, when Selkirk began pushing out for new trade, it was in the Athabasca and Peace districts that the Nor'Westers fought most savagely.

Colonization of the Red River country directly threatened their very existence, however. The Nor'Westers remembered, too, Lord Selkirk's questions about the fur trade when they entertained him in Montreal. They knew better than any other men how hare-brained was his scheme of establishing a colony in the center of a continent, a thousand miles or more from the farthest outpost of civilization. They had been put to enough trouble and expense in transporting goods and fur to and from that same district to understand how impossible it would be to dispose of agricultural products.

Whatever may be said of Lord Selkirk's high motives in providing land for distressed fellow countrymen, the fact remains that it was an absurd idea wholly impossible of accomplishment. It did not work, and it could not have been made to work. It resulted only in many years of hardship and privation for the people he sought to aid, in a vast expenditure of money, in much bitterness, and in bloodshed.

The Nor'Westers, well aware of the futility of the scheme and knowing that Selkirk was greatly interested in the fur trade, that he had already rejuvenated the dying Hudson's Bay Company and was now, in actual fact, that Company, saw in the Red River colony only a direct attack upon their own existence. If they did

not actually believe this at first, they soon convinced themselves it was true, and subsequent events supported the belief.

In the transportation system developed by the North West Company, pemmican was the chief article of diet of the voyageurs. Without such a concentrated food, efficient transport would have been seriously curtailed, if not stopped entirely. Now, in the grant to Selkirk, the Hudson's Bay Company designated a large part of the pemmican producing area, and included in that area were some of the chief meat posts and depots of the North West Company.

The Nor'Westers knew, too, that the 110,000 square miles of land were not sold but had been given to Lord Selkirk. The only remuneration imposed was that Selkirk furnish 200 servants annually for ten years, their wages to be paid by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Thus the picture became complete in the Nor'Westers' eyes. Selkirk was the Hudson's Bay Company. The colony only screened an attack upon themselves. On January 8, 1814, they had what they considered proof of this. Miles Macdonell, brother of a famous Nor'Wester, and whom Selkirk had made governor of his Red River settlement, issued a proclamation that no provisions were to be taken out of the colony grant for one year. In other words, the North West Company was not to be permitted to operate its fur brigades.

Later they had what they considered additional proof. In 1816 Selkirk wrote, "The North West Company must be compelled to quit my lands." In that same year he instructed an agent: "You must give them solemn warning that the land belongs to the Hudson's Bay Company. After this warning, they should not be allowed to cut any timber either for building or fuel. What they have cut should be openly and forcibly seized and their buildings destroyed. They should be treated as poachers. We are so fully advised of the unimpeachable validity of these rights of property, there can be no scruple in enforcing them when you have the physical means."

That was pure feudalism, Old World thought shoving the New World idea aside. Poaching on the untamed prairies of Manitoba! Later a rule was promulgated which forbade the killing of buffalo

when the hunter was on horseback! It was a mad scheme, attempting to plant a colony in the midst of a wilderness, and a madder one to promulgate European game regulations in a land where the people were savages or half-breeds and it was the habit of a man to rise in the morning and shoot his breakfast.

Nearly a century later, a Hudson's Bay servant wrote that the poaching rule alone was enough to arouse the half-breeds, sons and grandsons of French Canadians in the century voyageurs had roamed that country, against Selkirk's colony. And it was a death stroke for the Nor'Westers if they did not resist.

No incident in American history has been so prolific of bitterness and bias and fantastical writing as Selkirk's Red River settlement. British writers have not been so aroused by the revolt of 1776 or by the subsequent boundary disputes as by this family quarrel. It is a brave writer who, even at this late day, would venture to arbitrate. Descendants of the actors hold a fresh memory of events. Men who talked with the chief participants indited the story. Selkirk's own account has furnished a basis for history. Time seemed only to increase the bitterness.

But an unprejudiced observer, living more than a century later, gains distinct impressions, chief of which is that the importance of the affair has been given a false rating and coloring, and that there has been no understanding of fundamental factors or of the inevitable economic and social forces at work. The North West Company, the most powerful, aggressive and efficient organization in the New World, forerunner and first exponent of the spirit and mastery of American development, was thrown suddenly and unexpectedly into conflict with the spirit and principle of autocracy. Instinctively, and very humanly, the North West Company rose in quick defense of its life. That such a defense should become violent is only in accord with the nature of men who can conquer a wilderness. That autocracy should become dictatorial and unwise, and finally anarchial, is only in accord with its very essence. The inevitable occurred.

Simon McGillivray, writing from London to the Montreal organization for himself and Edward Ellice in 1811, said, "We will leave no means untried to thwart Selkirk's schemes, and being

stockholders of the Hudson's Bay Company we can annoy him and learn his measures in time to guard against them."

But Selkirk pursued his feudal way. A North West fort was broken into and 600 skins of pemmican, each weighing eighty-five pounds, were taken. North West buffalo hunters, gathering meat for the fur brigades, were held up in North Dakota and their pemmican was seized by Hudson's Bay men, acting under Selkirk's orders. North West leaders were instructed by Governor Macdonell to remove their posts from the colony lands or have them razed "to the foundations."

This was in 1814. The first colonists arrived in 1812, seventy of them, coming by ship to York Factory and thence up Hayes River to Lake Winnipeg and on to Red River. They were placed on land near what is now Winnipeg but that winter they went into North Dakota to live on buffalo. North West men kept them from starving. In the late summer of 1813 fifteen or twenty more arrived, and in January, 1814, Governor Miles Macdonell issued his poaching proclamation. The thing Nor'Westers feared in 1811 had come. Simon McGillivray had written, "Lord Selkirk must be driven to abandon his project, for his success would strike at the very existence of our trade." That blow had been delivered.

Meanwhile, the War of 1812 had been declared. North West communication with Montreal via the Great Lakes was threatened and the Nor'Westers applied to the British government for the right to bring their trade goods through Hudson Bay and send their furs by the same route. There was no action and, heavily armed, their voyageurs continued to use the Great Lakes route.

But events of 1814 at Red River demanded action if the Company were to continue in the fur trade. Lord Selkirk was the Hudson's Bay Company, and he had ordered the Nor'Westers to remove their meat depots and trading posts from colony lands. If they did this they were ruined. Alex Macdonell, whose brother had been killed by a Hudson's Bay man in the Albany district several years earlier, and Duncan Cameron, who had traded so successfully for the Nor'Westers in that same country, were sent to Red River to protect North West interests.

Facing such a situation, it is not surprising that Macdonell wrote, "Nothing but the complete downfall of the colony will satisfy some by fair or foul means, so here is at them with all my heart and energy," or that Cameron expressed the hope that the unruly and thieving Ojibwas of Minnesota would see a chance for pillage.

But even then the Nor'Westers did not resort to force. Duncan Cameron, in accordance with plans made at Fort William, attempted to win the friendship of the colonists, of whom ninety-three more arrived in 1814. He succeeded, and he did more. He planted a fear of the natives and half-breeds and he even induced the colonists to bring their cannon to the North West fort. His propaganda was supported by threatening acts on the part of half-breeds and in 1815 he produced a warrant for the arrest of Governor Macdonell on a charge of seizing North West pemican.

It was a clever, bloodless and well arranged plan on the part of the Nor'Westers. The settlers became terrified. Macdonell surrendered, and when he was taken to Canada for trial, 140 colonists accepted the North West Company's offer of assistance and went to Ontario, the logical place for a colony at that time. Some received as high as one hundred pounds from the North West Company.

The forty who remained were terrified by half-breeds under Cuthbert Grant and fled down Lake Winnipeg, intent only on getting back to Scotland. Their homes and fields of grain were destroyed. The half-breeds, hunters of buffalo on the plains, are popularly supposed to have been instigated in their action by the Nor'Westers. Perhaps they were. But in the summer of 1814 Governor Macdonell had promulgated another Selkirk law. This forbade even Indians to gather bark for canoes or wood for campfires. It is incomprehensible, but it is true. As a Hudson's Bay man wrote nearly a century later, this transplanting of English game laws was enough to have aroused the half-breeds without help from the Nor'Westers. Selkirk's blunders in operating his colony were as great as the original blunder of establishing it.

Violence had come. It was inevitable. A Hudson's Bay fort was attacked by half-breeds and besieged for weeks, though the colo-

nists were allowed to flee unharmed. Arrests were made on both sides. Colin Robertson, leaving his supervisory position in London to head the Hudson's Bay forces in America, came through from Montreal with a fleet of canoes manned by two hundred French Canadians, a two-fold departure in Hudson's Bay practice, this use of the North West route and of voyageurs. His objective was Athabasca, but he sent the brigade on under John Clarke, another former North West clerk, and went in pursuit of the fleeing colonists. Robertson led them back, recaptured their arms and made a prisoner of Duncan Cameron, the Nor'Wester in charge of Red River, who was held as a hostage until captured Hudson's Bay cannon were returned.

That fall of 1815 one hundred new colonists arrived, escorted by as many Hudson's Bay men and a new governor, Robert Semple. Robertson did not approve of this executive, who believed a Nor'Wester with his back to the wall could be argued with. Robertson wanted to use force, and he knew that Semple's policy of continuing to seize North West pemmican would bring violent resistance. He dispatched a messenger to Selkirk at Montreal and early in 1816 arrested Duncan Cameron and sent him down to the Bay, to be taken a prisoner to England.

Semple continued his fatuous way. He knew nothing of Indians, half-breeds or the wilderness. He believed the mere enactment of a law insured its enforcement, that even savages respected English law. Robertson quit in disgust and went to the Bay where, with Duncan Cameron, his prisoner, he was ice-bound until 1817. Semple, that summer of 1816, walked out of the Hudson's Bay fort, at the head of twenty-seven men, to meet a band of about sixty half-breeds under Cuthbert Grant. The half-breeds were riding toward the settlers' cabins, not the fort, and when Semple commanded them to stop, the half-breeds opened fire. Semple was wounded. Only six of the twenty-seven are said to have escaped. Cuthbert Grant tried to prevent the massacre. Semple was stabbed as he lay on the ground. One half-breed was killed, another wounded.

That was the massacre of Seven Oaks. Wildly extravagant tales, product of the passions of the moment, have come to us. The massacre was regrettable, and the natural and inevitable out-

come of the basic situation. The wonder of this whole affair is that there was not more violence and more bloodshed.

As it was, the Seven Oaks incident itself probably served a good end. It resulted in a royal proclamation that violence must cease, and the ignoring of that proclamation by both Selkirk and the Nor'Westers eventually brought an end to the struggle. It also occurred when all the brigades of the North West Company for the west and north were on their way from Fort William and Rainy Lake. Semple had announced they could not pass. They came determined to pass. If they did not their trade was ruined.

Still another force was bound for Red River. Selkirk himself was on his way from Montreal to protect the colony. Had he met the Nor'Westers out there on the plains of Manitoba, the story of the fur trade would undoubtedly have been far different. But, at Sault Ste. Marie, Selkirk heard of the Seven Oaks affair and decided on a counter move, going to Fort William instead of west through Minnesota.

With Selkirk were a band of mercenaries, the De Meuron soldiers remaining in Canada after the war of 1812. The contention is that he was taking them west to become part of his colony, but they carried their uniforms and arms and they now seized Fort William, stronghold of the Nor'Westers. As the North West Company men had done at Fort Douglas on Red River, Selkirk took possession of all correspondence, accounts and papers. He released the prisoners brought from Manitoba and held in Fort William by the Nor'Westers and seized all goods and furs, claimed by the Nor'Westers to have been worth £68,000, and made prisoners of the North West partners, some of the most prominent members of the Company. These were sent under guard to Canada, where they were immediately released under bail.

Had Selkirk arrived earlier, he would have stopped the entire trade of the North West Company for the year, or there would have been a bloody pitched battle. As it was, the far western and northern brigades had departed, but the outfits for the Red and Winnipeg Rivers and for Lake Superior were held up for the year.

Selkirk went on to Red River in 1817, reestablished his colony, left the De Meuron soldiers and returned to eastern Canada by



the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. In Montreal he found himself and his men, Colin Robertson among them, in a tangle of legal procedure. Charges and counter charges were brought by both sides. Selkirk, of course, had little chance in the home of the Nor'Westers, but the courts were also not certain in the matter of jurisdiction. In 1817 and 1818 many of both sides were tried on charges from murder down, but there were no convictions except in one murder case, and no execution in that. In two civil suits for false imprisonment, Selkirk was assessed £2,000 damages. North West prisoners taken to England were not brought to trial.

If any one wishes a partisan viewpoint on the Red River affair, he will find plenty of evidence left by either side. They published pamphlets of defense and attack. Adherents kept it up for nearly a century. The whole affair was an affront to the British sense of order and justice, wherein lies the chief cause of the common attitude against the North West Company. If the Nor'-Westers, after discovering and opening up half a continent, had abandoned a valuable enterprise and quietly withdrawn from the scene when a philanthropic nobleman conceived the hare-brained idea of planting a feudal colony in the midst of the American wilderness, there would have been no trouble and no disorder.

## CHAPTER XXX

The North West Company could not devote all its energies to Lord Selkirk and the Hudson's Bay Company. When the Scotch lord injected himself into the fur trade situation, another opponent entered the field, John Jacob Astor and his Pacific Fur Company. Lewis and Clark had reached the mouth of the Columbia, the United States claimed that territory, and now planned to occupy it.

No! The North West Company had already been active west of the Rocky Mountains. In 1797 John Finlay had followed Alexander Mackenzie's Peace River route and explored the Parsnip and Finlay Rivers, the confluence of which forms the Peace, but not until 1805 was a post established in what is now northern British Columbia. In 1806 James McDougall continued the work there and Simon Fraser and John Stuart began exploration and establishment of posts. By 1808 Fraser, Stuart and Jules Quesnel had followed the Fraser River almost to the sea, believing it to be the Columbia. This was one of the most difficult journeys of discovery ever made on the continent, ranking, for courage and determination required and for hardship and danger encountered, with Sir Alexander Mackenzie's expedition to the Pacific in 1793.

Farther south, Duncan McGillivray had discovered Howse Pass in 1800, a fact which, with the subsequent work of David Thompson, has already been told. As a result of all this activity west of the mountains, the North West Company had established many posts and was developing a considerable trade.

The Nor'Westers had been active in the far north also, having built Fort Nelson on the upper Liard. They had a post on Great Bear Lake about 1800. In 1805 Alexander Mackenzie, not Sir Alexander but another Nor'Wester of the same name, made an attempt to reach the Yukon from Mackenzie River but was held

by ice in Great Bear Lake. He did build a post farther down the Mackenzie.

The scarcity of beaver after 1804 has already been referred to, and a few years later the North West Company realized that it must expand still more. At this juncture John Jacob Astor evolved a plan for opening up the fur trade on the Pacific coast and he suggested to the Nor'Westers that they coöperate with him and receive one-third interest.

Astor, a German, had arrived in America when the North West Company was just getting into its stride in 1783 and 1784. Following an immediate and successful venture in the fur trade in New York, he quickly expanded his operations and came in touch with the Nor'Westers. He was seen often in Montreal, knew the North West partners intimately and was soon buying much of their fur and shipping it to Europe and China, the last market being otherwise inaccessible because of the East India Company's monopoly.

They must have been much alike, those Highlanders and the German. Both were originators of the big business idea. Astor admired the Nor'Westers and their methods, but in the end they were too much for him. No direct evidence on their relations is available, but at this distance it would seem that the Scotchmen proved too clever. We have already told of the Michilimackinac and South West Companies and how the North West men sold out when war threatened. At the same time they refused Astor's offer of a third interest in the Pacific enterprise. Whether they believed they could get in ahead of him, or saw a chance to win through the war that was already looming, cannot be determined.

When Astor failed to enlist the North West Company in his enterprise he made his first mistake. He induced three Nor'Westers to leave their company and join him as partners and obtained the services of others, as well as of French Canadian voyageurs. Astor evidently was convinced of the superiority of Nor'Westers in the fur trade. Those in his party included Duncan McDougall, Alexander McKay, who had crossed to the Pacific with Mackenzie; Donald Mackenzie, a brother of Roderick; two Stuarts, Robert and David, and John Clarke. Clarke was a clerk in the North West Company and, according to a letter from George Keith to

Roderick Mackenzie, was not well liked. "A little elevation is apt to dazzle and make us sometimes forget the previous footing we were on. This, I am persuaded, was his foible." Later Clarke joined Selkirk and became a leader in the final struggle.

Astor sent out two parties, one by sea on the *Tonquin*, which was commanded by Captain Thorn, and another overland on the Lewis and Clark route under William P. Hunt. The *Tonquin* arrived at the mouth of the Columbia in March, 1811, and Astoria was immediately erected. The land expedition arrived the next February. Meanwhile, as we have told, David Thompson reached Astoria by canoe in July, 1811, nearly four months after Astor's men.

This has always been referred to as a race between Astor and the Nor'westers, with Astor winning. J. B. Tyrrell said there is nothing in Thompson's journal to indicate that he was trying to get in first. It is significant, however, that when Thompson reached the mouth of the Snake he claimed the country for Great Britain.

Whatever Thompson's intentions, he left Astoria after a week's stay. He completed his survey of the river from source to mouth that summer and a year later, in 1812, was back at Fort William. Undoubtedly he had sent a report by the winter express and the partners were aware of Astor's success.

The North West Company took immediate advantage of the War of 1812. They determined to send a ship to the mouth of the Columbia and asked the British government to give them a naval escort, which was done. The escort reached Astoria late in 1813 and the Company's ship, the *Isaac Todd*, in April, 1814.

Meanwhile, Astor had sent a second ship, the *Beaver*, which reached Astoria in May, 1812, to learn that his first vessel, the *Tonquin*, had been destroyed, with practically all her crew; at Nootka, on the west coast of Vancouver Island. In 1813, despite the war, Astor sent out the *Lark*, which was wrecked near the Hawaiian Islands on its way north.

The loss of the *Tonquin* was a severe blow to Astor. After depositing the Astorians at the mouth of the Columbia, she went north to participate in the profitable coast trade. At Nootka Captain Thorn, despite warnings, permitted the Indians, known to be treacherous, to come aboard in large numbers, and the natives

seized the ship, killing nearly the entire crew. Only one man eventually escaped. A member of the crew got into the powder room and blew up the ship when several hundred Indians boarded it the next day. Alexander McKay, of Mackenzie's Pacific party in 1793, was slain. Captain Thorn is generally blamed for the disaster. Irving's story of this thrilling affair is recommended to the reader.

Astor's second ship, the *Beaver*, sailed to China with fur and remained there until after the war, news of which did not reach Astoria until January, 1813. Meanwhile, the Astorians had begun to establish posts inland and to buy fur. But when the North West Company decided in 1812 to take advantage of the war and send a ship to the Columbia, it decided also to send an overland party. This was in command of John George McTavish and Alexander Henry the Younger and it swept across the continent on David Thompson's well worn trail. The van, under McTavish, reached Astoria in April, 1813. Donald Mackenzie had met this party inland and brought the news, and when the Nor'Westers arrived the Astorians had already decided to abandon the enterprise.

This is understandable. The *Tonquin* had been destroyed, the *Beaver* had sailed to China, and now the North West Company's *Isaac Todd* was on its way with a British naval escort. The Nor'Westers might romp across the continent in a few months but such speedy communication was not possible on the American side. In that summer of 1813 the Astor men in charge of inland posts arrived with their fur, more than 150 packs, and it was decided to hold out for another year.

But on October 6 a North West overland party of seventy-five men arrived. They had expected the *Isaac Todd* and its naval convoy before this. With England and the United States in conflict, and men-of-war to shell Astoria, it would have been an easy matter to capture the fort and take possession of the entire district. Now they were without provisions and without support for open warfare.

From that day to this there has been heated discussion as to what motives underlay the subsequent events. Astor's leaders and voyageurs were British and old friends and former business part-

ners of the North West men. Hunt, loyal to Astor, was absent. Duncan McDougall, ex-Nor'Wester, was in command of Astoria. McDougall stoutly maintained afterward that he took the only step that would save Astor from complete loss, but his motives have always been questioned because he sold the Astor property outright to the North West Company, accepting a \$40,000 draft for goods and furs said to have been worth \$100,000.

The bill of sale was signed on October 16, 1813. It is contended that the Nor'Westers tried to delay matters, hoping the British ships would arrive, in which event purchase would not be necessary. A man-of-war did not reach the Columbia until November 30th. It formally took over the country in the name of the British King and Astoria became Fort George.

Astor's ire was great. Duncan McDougall soon became a partner in the North West Company, which has been construed as a reward for selling out. The British flag floated at the mouth of the Columbia and Northwest posts dotted that stream and its tributaries. The United States was too busy with the war to help Astor. The Nor'Westers were in complete control west of the Rockies.

The British government acted with its characteristic indifference in regard to American possessions. The North West Company attempted to get backing for its Pacific coast projects but it was not forthcoming. The treaty of peace left Astoria under the American flag, but the Nor'Westers in possession. Sir Alexander Mackenzie wrote Roderick from London in 1819: "That crafty, cunning statesman, Gallatin—Astor's friend—was the principal negotiator on the part of the Americans. He would be too many for our people, who are governed more by theory than practice."

In the same letter Sir Alexander said it was "now believed there were plenty of beaver in that country," but the North West Company had already demonstrated this. It began shipping directly to China in 1814.

With characteristic energy, the Nor'Westers developed the interior. The Indians of the West Coast were not good hunters. They lived too easily on salmon. Inland, the Snakes and other tribes were not always friendly. As a result, the North West Company inaugurated a new policy, that of sending large parties

of its own white, half-breed and Indian hunters into the mountains to trap. They went inland and to the southeast and also down the coast, probably into California. After union in 1821, the Hudson's Bay Company continued this practice for many years, successfully competing with American traders and trappers beyond Great Salt Lake and in the Sacramento valley in California.

The Nor'Westers had no sooner gained possession of the Columbia basin than they were subjected to the first attack of any proportions ever made by the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1815 Selkirk attempted to win a place in the rich districts of the Peace and Athabasca, where Peter Fidler had failed so signally from 1802 to 1806.

We have already seen the beginning of this movement when Hudson's Bay canoes manned by French Canadian voyageurs arrived at Red River from Montreal, and Colin Robertson, their leader, sent them on to Athabasca under command of John Clarke, former North West clerk and former Astorian, while Robertson himself turned aside to find and bring back the colonists driven out by the half-breeds that summer.

In the 145 years of its existence, the Hudson's Bay Company had never undertaken so ambitious an enterprise. Robertson, who had remained in London as supervisor after the reorganization of the Company's policy in December, 1811, was undoubtedly responsible for the Athabasca campaign, and he came to Canada to take charge in person. Not only was Selkirk aroused by the opposition of the Nor'Westers to his colonization scheme but if the Hudson's Bay Company were to continue as a fur trading enterprise it must enter new fields. Beaver scarcity had hit Selkirk's organization even harder than it had the North West Company, which had acquired the Columbia River country. The Hudson's Bay must expand or cease to exist.

' The Red River trouble expressed a conflict of ideas. Invasion of Athabasca by the Hudson's Bay Company was distinctly a fur trader's struggle, and was the first on a large scale between the rival concerns. For two reasons, the opposition of the Nor'Westers was of an entirely different nature than in previous trade rivalry. Bitterness had been aroused by events in Red River and by Selkirk's entrance into the fur trade, and the North West Company

considered the Peace and Athabasca its own by right of discovery and development.

The Hudson's Bay did not stint itself in preparing to capture Athabasca. Robertson wrote that he had two hundred men, French Canadians employed near Montreal. W. F. Wentzel, a Norwegian who was clerk in the North West Company for many years, in writing to Roderick Mackenzie from Fort Chipewyan in May, 1816, said the Hudson's Bay sent in more than one hundred men, ten clerks and a superintendent, with fourteen canoes of goods. Whatever the number, it was a large party.

Clarke left men at Ile à la Crosse to establish a post there and sent some on to Lesser Slave Lake to build another near the upper Peace. At Lake Athabasca he erected Fort Wedderburn on an island directly in front of Fort Chipewyan and then sent a party down Slave River under McAulay to build on Great Slave Lake. Another went up the Athabasca River and a detachment remained at Wedderburn under Roderick Mackenzie, a Hudson's Bay man of the same name as the famous Nor'Wester.

Clarke himself departed up Peace River with forty-eight men. Later he wrote Selkirk he did not have an ounce of food. The North West Company saw to it that he did not get any. It sent men ahead to drive all animals away from the river. Eight days later, John McGillivray overtook Clarke and found his crew in a pitiable condition. McGillivray kept close watch on his men to see that they did not give food to the rivals and then went on ahead. At Fort Vermillion the Indians were sent away from the river so that they could not be induced to hunt for the Hudson's Bay party or were warned not to trade with it.

Clarke, too, went ahead of his men and at Fort Vermillion the Nor'Westers treated him very shabbily. This was for effect on the Indians. The North West Company had been in that district for thirty-seven years. The only Hudson's Bay men the Indians had seen or heard of were those under Peter Fidler, who had failed so signally from 1802 to 1806. By showing contempt for their rivals, the Nor'Westers, knowing the native character, would belittle the Hudson's Bay men in the Indians' eyes.

It worked. Clarke went on upriver, but again John McGil-



livray was ahead of him, and later Colin Campbell at Dunvegan wrote that he got every Indian out of the way.

Meanwhile, far down the river, Clarke's main party was in a serious plight. It was in command of George McDougall, brother of a famous Nor'Wester. Twelve of his men decided to go back to Athabasca. One drowned. Eight more starved to death on the way. John McGillivray found the others and there was nothing for McDougall to do except agree to give up his trade goods and not to oppose the North West Company for a year. He and his men were taken to Fort Vermillion, though one starved on the way. From there they were sent across to Lesser Slave Lake and on to the Saskatchewan. McDougall went up the Peace to find his brother in British Columbia and joined the North West Company.

Clarke, too, gave up as he saw his men starving. He agreed not to trade if he and his party were given food for their return to Lake Athabasca. Clarke spent the remainder of the winter at Fort Wedderburn and in June went out. James Bird, Hudson's Bay superintendent for the west, wrote Lord Selkirk that the disaster had been complete. The cost to the Hudson's Bay Company is said to have been put at £20,000 in the minutes, and has been placed much higher. Seventeen or eighteen men died.

John Clarke had served for the North West Company on the Peace ten years earlier, then had gone with Astor, and now when he came back for the Hudson's Bay he aroused the ire of the Nor'Westers, as had Colin Robertson. Until very recently, that spirit still existed in the Hudson's Bay Company. If a servant resigned to become a free trader or to work for the opposition, he was subject to even more severe competition than an outsider would have been. That fierce spirit of loyalty and solidarity was particularly strong among the Nor'Westers in the Athabasca campaigns and unusual pains were taken to crush Clarke. Nor was Clarke's lot made any easier by his boast, uttered before arrival, that he would take every Nor'Wester out a prisoner.

Bitter charges were made against the North West Company as a result of that winter. We must remember, however, that the Nor'Westers had discovered and developed that country, that its

rich returns meant the continued existence of their partnership, that it was, in truth, a life and death struggle. No violence occurred. They scattered game and Indians, and as a result Hudson's Bay men died of starvation. But, as the North West Company answered the charges, Clarke's expedition was not prepared for such a campaign. Clarke himself admitted this to Selkirk when he said they started without an ounce of food. He had worked for the Nor'Westers in that country, and should have known what would happen.

Whatever judgment we, comfortably surrounded by all the advantages of civilization more than a century later, and with nothing at stake, may pass on the actions of the North West Company that winter, there was one Nor'Wester who believed they had been too soft. He was Archibald Norman McLeod, a famous partner who in the summer of 1816 was sent to Athabasca to direct the struggle in that entire district. He came with a commission as justice of the peace and the first thing he did was to cause the arrest of Duncan Campbell, a clerk who had been left in charge of Fort Wedderburn. When Clarke arrived in September to try it again, he and his men were baited into a *mêlée* and Clarke was arrested. Thirty packs of Hudson's Bay trade goods were exacted as bail. Before the winter was half over, Fort Wedderburn was seized. Evidently the Hudson's Bay accomplished no more that winter than in the year previous. The following May, George Keith wrote to Roderick Mackenzie that the opposition did not get two packs. "The common *engages* are, through necessity and ignorance, to be pitied," he said, "but I can hardly feel much for their leader."

In other parts of the Athabasca district, as the whole Mackenzie basin was called, the Hudson's Bay Company did no better than on the Peace. Archibald McLellan, in charge for the Nor'Westers at Great Slave Lake, wrote that in the first attempt he had forced his opponents to give up seventeen days after arrival.

The Hudson's Bay Company did not make a serious effort in the winter of 1817. Wentzel wrote to Roderick Mackenzie that the North West brought out 450 packs, an increase of nearly fifty over the previous year, and that "the Hudson's Bay have not even half a pack to boast of." In the same letter, written at Rainy

Lake in the summer of 1818, Wentzel told of the second large-scale assault of the Hudson's Bay, when Colin Robertson himself was in charge and went in with eighteen canoes and more than a hundred men, and when a "bungling error" gave the Nor'Westers their first set-back. Pierre de Rocheblave, an old North West partner in charge at Fort William that summer, failed to provide sufficient men and goods on time and the Nor'Westers were held up by the ice near the mouth of Peace River.

Robertson was ahead of the ice, and he sent Clarke up the Peace with ten well equipped canoes. Clarke built a post near Smoky Forks and, while no information has come to us, he must have obtained a large portion of the Peace River furs, for the North West goods never got through. There was a bloodless conflict of which both companies made much. The North West charged that Clarke made an attack on Fort Vermillion and attempted to seize food supplies. The Hudson's Bay retorted that Clarke was only trying to rescue one of his men captured by his opponents.

But if the Nor'Westers failed to get goods to the Peace River posts, they did not quit fighting. Robertson was at Fort Wedderburn with a strong force, well armed, but in a short time the Hudson's Bay leader was made prisoner by Samuel Black by a ruse, and he was held throughout the winter. Each Company, as usual, had its story of the affair, but it is significant, in this instance, that Robertson's own accounts, as given in letters, coincide more with the North West version than with that of the Hudson's Bay. The same holds true in subsequent events in which Robertson was concerned.

It must be remembered that Robertson and Clarke, Hudson's Bay leaders, were striving desperately to make a showing for their employer, Lord Selkirk, and that Selkirk, incensed by the attacks on his colony, was striving as desperately to crush the North West Company. Also, a royal proclamation commanding a cessation of violence had been issued in 1817 and Selkirk naturally wished to show the edict had been flaunted by his opponents rather than by himself.

An allied factor in the situation was the natural instinct of men on both sides to boast. Robertson was a rather flamboyant writer,

addicted to melodramatic phrases, and Clarke was never remarkable for his modesty. Both entered the campaign with confident promises and, quite naturally, had to explain such crushing defeats. The best authority on the Peace River affair is J. N. Wallace, and he points out that reports and journals of North West clerks and even partners must be subjected to careful examination, as each wanted to impress his superiors or associates with the valor and efficiency of his own action.

It is undoubtedly due to communications of men in the field, upon which all public charges and official memorials were largely based, that the Athabasca campaigns assume a violence and lawlessness far beyond the actual facts. Hatred was engendered, too, and led to boasts and assertions and accusations, and even to actions of a violent nature on occasion. But the real truth, which can never be attained, would undoubtedly paint a far less colorful picture of those last days.

In the beginnings of the Red River trouble both sides in the controversy adopted a means of attack which was much used. This was arrest under legal warrant. Selkirk is charged with having assumed power to issue such warrants at Fort William. The Nor'Westers, through influence in Montreal, probably were validly appointed. But the question of jurisdiction was still clouded and the fact remains that warrants were used to cripple opponents rather than to attain justice.

In the summer of 1819, Selkirk made use of this weapon on a large scale. He sent warrants for the arrest of several prominent Nor'Westers to Red River and Governor Williams, who had succeeded Semple, went to Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan, near where that river enters Lake Winnipeg, and there, with an armed force of De Meurons and others and light artillery, awaited the North West fur brigades. One of the objects was to rescue Robertson, who was being taken out prisoner to Montreal, but Robertson broke his parole at Cumberland House and escaped. Each North West canoe was stopped, papers were seized and Benjamin Frobisher, John D. Campbell, William MacIntosh, John George McTavish and Angus Shaw were arrested. Campbell was taken to eastern Canada. MacIntosh escaped a few days later. McTavish and Shaw were sent to the Bay and on to England.

None was ever brought to trial. The idea seemed to be merely to get them out of the country.

Frobisher, said to have been a son of Joseph Frobisher, pioneer Nor'Wester, and popular in the Company, was a huge man of violent temper and he resisted arrest. He is said to have been severely injured in the head and when taken to York Factory he was not sent on to England but kept prisoner. According to North West versions, he was badly treated and at length escaped, only to die of privations on his way to the nearest North West post.

The death of Frobisher aroused the Nor'Westers to fury. There had been bitterness. Now there was hatred. No Nor'Wester believed Selkirk to be a sincere philanthropist. Wentzel spoke of him in letters as a "noble imposter," and a "titled, envious, or rather covetous individual." Robertson and Clarke were anathema.

But Great Britain, too, was aroused, and therein, perhaps more than in anything else, lay the end. The royal proclamation of 1817, which commanded a cessation of hostilities and a return of all captured property, had been ignored by Selkirk as well as by the Nor'Westers.

And the summer of 1820 the North West Company adopted Selkirk's policy and held up Hudson's Bay canoes at Grand Rapids, arresting Robertson and others. It even defied the government when an officer who had arrested North West men was seized and his prisoners were released.

Other arrests followed, and charges were made by both sides, but often accusations appeared to be a defense rather than an attack. The truth probably is that each Company adopted any means possible to win. The attitude of the leaders became more bitter. Duels were fought. Canoemen were groomed for battle. Intimidation was freely used. The whole truth, and the exact truth, of those last few years will never be known.

Robertson escaped after his arrest, may have been permitted to, for none of those arrested so freely was ever brought to trial. Four hundred and fifty packs of fur from Athabasca for the North West Company and less than half a dozen for the Hudson's Bay was the cause. Whichever won that rich district would survive.

In the final winter of 1820, a little drama concluded the hostilities, but we have only a hint of it, none of the details. A young man just arrived from England, George Simpson, with no experience in the fur trade, was sent to Lake Athabasca as a clerk by the Hudson's Bay. He had fifteen canoes. The North West Company was abundantly supplied with goods and men. Wentzel wrote confidently to Roderick Mackenzie that they had nothing to fear.

But the Hudson's Bay evidently was gaining on the Peace. Robertson himself went up the river in 1819 and wintered at Smoky Forks. In 1820 the Selkirk forces had reached Fort St. John, in the mountains. It is probable that the North West Company's failure to get in supplies in 1818 had given their opponents a foothold. Also, the persistence of Hudson's Bay efforts may have at last broken down the Nor'Westers' control over the Indians, an inevitable effect of competition.

Whatever the exact situation, the North West forces were continuing the fight, and in that fall of 1820 sent across the mountains to British Columbia for Samuel Black, the man who had arrested Colin Robertson two years earlier.

Black, a big man, confident and aggressive, popular with his fellows, had been one of the most reckless and determined of Nor'Westers. With Peter Skene Ogden, he had driven the Hudson's Bay from the Ile à la Crosse district by means which, according to Hudson's Bay reports, were most questionable. Ogden, too, was a stormy petrel. His father, a New Jersey loyalist, was a leading magistrate in Canada. Peter had studied law but a defect in his voice turned him from the bar and he joined the Nor'-Wester .

Samuel Black, who had bluffed and bullied his way to victory, now appeared at Fort Chipewyan in the winter of 1820-1821 to use similar methods on the mild-mannered George Simpson. The ostensible reason was to effect the release of Simon McGillivray, son of William McGillivray, who had been arrested by a constable brought in by the Hudson's Bay.

Of what Simpson did to Black, no details have come down to us, and we miss one of the most significant incidents in our story. There is only this tantalizing reference, contained in a letter

written in 1823 by Governor George Simpson, commander of the united North West and Hudson's Bay Companies:

"Black could at first hardly look me in the face. He remembered my Athabasca campaign, and never will he forget the terrors in which he was kept that winter. We parted excellent friends."

The alien in Athabasca of whom Wentzel wrote to Roderick Mackenzie, "His being a stranger and reputed a gentlemanly man, will not create much alarm," subdued the most aggressive and reckless of the Nor'Westers. Had fur land known, it would have recognized there a new force, a force that was to continue for forty years, molding and welding and directing the turbulent actors of the North's most violent period, guiding a machine such as the commercial world had never known. George Simpson appeared in the last moments of the conflict. He was only a clerk. Twelve months later he was in command of all the north.

But while Nor'Westers and Hudson's Bay men were fighting for fur in distant Athabasca, matters of far greater moment were occurring across the Atlantic. Lord Selkirk had gone home after the trials in Lower Canada in 1819, a broken and disillusioned man. He crossed over to France with his family and died there on April 8, 1820. The man was generous and possessed high motives, but he was an aristocrat and believed that, as such, his will should prevail. His was the ill-conceived and futile attempt to plant a colony in the midst of the American wilderness, to install autocracy at that late date on the American continent. Forces of which the Nor'Westers were only the instruments brought about his defeat.

And while Simpson cowed Black and Nor'Wester fought Hudson's Bay man across half the continent that winter, a few men met in London to battle with words and plans and demands and rejections. By March, while winter still gripped the distant north, they reached an agreement, and the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies were united.

## CHAPTER XXXI

Much that happened in those last days is obscure. Many necessary details are lacking. The legend is that the Hudson's Bay Company "absorbed" the North West Company. A high official of the Company used that expression only last year. There is abundant evidence that no "absorption" occurred, for the North West men got a bigger share, but of the events immediately preceding the merger, of the actual condition of the two companies, of the drama that was inevitable when two such hostile forces came together, we know almost nothing.

It has been commonly said, and the statement has been repeated in this volume, that the merger occurred when the opponents had been brought to the brink of ruin. Perhaps this is an exaggeration. At least we have no definite information on the subject. The truth probably is that neither could have continued the struggle without inviting bankruptcy.

We do know that the North West Company had been a most successful organization up to 1810, and that the Hudson's Bay at that time was in a serious situation financially. Nothing in the existing record leads one to believe that the chartered concern rose to great prosperity in the next eleven years, although it was vastly more energetic under Selkirk than ever before.

The Hudson's Bay Company suffered great losses in the Athabasca campaign. The Company records place them at £20,000 in the first year, and they are said to have been twice that. Practically no fur was obtained from Athabasca until the end of the third year, and in 1819 when Colin Robertson reached Athabasca, he wrote, "Well may the Nor'Westers boast success. Not an Indian dares to speak to the Hudson's Bay." On the other hand, the North West Company increased its exports from that district.

On March 26, 1821, the day the agreement to unite was signed in London, Wentzel wrote Roderick Mackenzie, and, after telling



that the Hudson's Bay had "apparently relaxed in the extravagance of their measures," having come into the district with only fifteen canoes, each containing about fifteen pieces, and after describing George Simpson, he said: "Indeed, Mr. Leith, who manages the concerns of the North West Company in Athabasca, has been so liberally supplied with men and goods that it will be almost wonderful if the opposition can make good a subsistence during the winter. Fort Chipewyan alone has an equipment of no less than seventy men, enough to crush their rivals."

Wentzel wrote from Fort Enterprise, near Coppermine River, where he was with the Franklin expedition, and had left Fort Chipewyan in the fall before the Black-Simpson affair. As Wentzel is almost our only source of information relative to Athabasca in that period, and was a ready news purveyor, we miss much through his having been detailed to the exploring party.

The customs house figures on imports from Hudson Bay, which represent fur shipped by the Hudson's Bay Company, show that the total in 1810, amounts in pounds, was 8,776. In 1811 it jumped to 28,768, in 1812 was 29,062, and in 1814 had dropped to 15,826. By 1816 it was down to 8,124 but in 1817 was 28,098. It then declined gradually to 22,468 in 1820 and was 27,521 in 1821. 1822 it leaped to 39,144 and thenceforth increased, with some irregularities. These figures represent customs appraisals and serve only to indicate yearly comparisons. They are proof that the Hudson's Bay Company under Selkirk's direction, and with its servants in the field sharing in the profits, was a far more successful and efficient organization than ever before. While we have no definite figures for the North West Company, we do know that its partners were wealthy, that it retained control in the rich Athabasca district, and that in 1815, only two years after Astor's defeat, its sale of Columbia River fur alone brought \$101,155. Dr. John McLoughlin made the statement that the Company's profits in 1814 were £75,000. As late as January 14, 1819, Sir Alexander Mackenzie wrote to his cousin Roderick: "Upon the whole they have not turned out so disastrous to the North West Company as might naturally have been apprehended. The losses sustained in the country, though severe and serious, have been, in a considerable degree, compensated by the high prices obtained for

the furs, the sales of which were certainly managed with great judgment in London."

He went on to say that the returns from all quarters brought £50,000 more than had been estimated, a fact which indicates a large volume of business.

One of the very few authentic bits of information coming from those last days is a letter written by John George McTavish in Fort William on April 22, 1821, almost a month after the terms of union had been signed. McTavish, of course, did not know what had happened in London and he was writing, for the benefit of the Montreal agents, a résumé of communications received from the interior by the winter express, which had left most posts since the first of January.

His letter, written hurriedly that the facts might be rushed east, does not disclose any pessimism or suggest that the struggle was nearing an end. He reported on want of provisions in some districts because of a mild season, on rumored plans of the Hudson's Bay Company to repeat the Grand Rapids blockade with an artillery-mounted scow, on several instances of violence in the interior, including the three duels, but uniformly the communications indicate that fur receipts were up to standard or expectations.

While definite details are not known, it has been stated that the North West Company decided at Fort William in 1820 to continue the twenty-year agreement of 1802 for ten years. It was reported, too, that there was a difference of opinion between the agents in Montreal and the wintering partners, and also that some partners were not informed of the meeting, while others refused to attend. A clear understanding and definite knowledge of just what the North West Company did in its last years, and of what its financial condition was, of how it viewed the struggle and estimated its prospects, would be vastly interesting and valuable. From what we do know, however, there is little doubt but that Nor'Westers in the field would have carried on. They had borne the brunt of the actual conflict. Theirs was the bitterness and the hatred and the passionate determination aroused by that conflict. Men of their type rarely quit in any sort of fight.

But other forces were at work, one from outside the struggle itself, and these forces, in the end, were the determining factors. The business heads of the rival organizations, the men who furnished the capital and were interested first of all in profits, men far removed from the actual conflict and with little of the personal feelings engendered in the hand-to-hand struggle in the American wilderness, had come to recognize, as business men always do, that belligerent competition did not produce dividends. The North West-X Y struggle was fresh in the minds of all. The success of the North West Company in the Athabasca country, in the long years it held undisputed sway, was a splendid example of what exclusive trade could mean.

The outside force brought to bear was the British government itself. In 1817 W. B. Coltman was sent west by the governor general of Canada to investigate. He did so, and the impartiality of his report has been commented on by many writers. There is proof of his lack of bias in the fact that both the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies found fault on the grounds that he did not give all the facts, which means he was not impressed by their propaganda.

Coltman not only made a thorough investigation and report but he made also a confidential report on the situation. In the west he took the depositions of many men on both sides who had been actively engaged in the conflict. He saw Selkirk in Red River, and some of the principal partners of the North West Company, and it was inevitable that he gained impressions of their characters and attitudes that told more than their spoken words. He probably saw that the wintering partners were determined to carry on the battle and that there could be no peace. In any event, he recommended to the government that the two companies be united. Peace could not be attained in any other way in such a vast wilderness.

In support of the foregoing résumé of probable reasons for the merging of the rivals, we have a comprehensive and authoritative statement from a man who was in possession of all the facts and who, through his long connection with the fur trade in both companies, was fitted to give an impartial view. Edward Ellice was

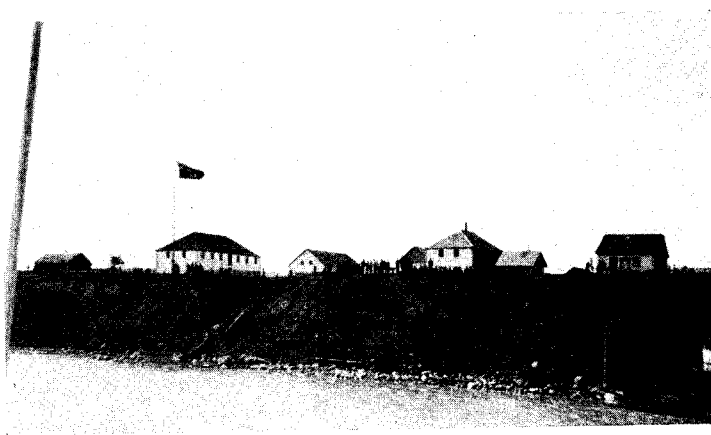
the son of Alexander Ellice, one of the early London agents and backers of the North West Company. Edward Ellice went to Montreal in 1803 and was associated with Sir Alexander MacKenzie in the X Y Company. We have already told how he attempted to buy the Hudson's Bay Company outright. He did not remain in Canada long and in London he became one of the principal agents of the North West Company until the union. After union, he continued actively in the direction of Hudson's Bay affairs for nearly half a century and was deputy governor for five years.

During a Parliamentary investigation of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1857, Ellice, himself a member of Parliament and of the committee which conducted the hearings, was called to the stand. His testimony is very fine. His statements were definite, decided and often emphatic. He was the grand old man of the Hudson's Bay Company. In answer to a question, he told of the conflict between the two companies and said that Coltman recommended union as the only way out. Nothing was done, however, and the companies, Ellice said, "were brought nearly to insolvency; not only the companies in Canada but the Hudson's Bay Company."

"In this state of things," Ellice continued, "I think about 1819 or 1820, Lord Bathurst, then Secretary of State for the Colonies, sent for me to consult me whether it was possible to do anything toward promoting a union between the two companies. I undertook that matter, not only at his request, but from obvious considerations of interest, having become under considerable engagements for one of the companies; and after a very difficult negotiation, I succeeded in uniting the interests of the various parties, and inducing them to carry on the trade after that agreement under the charter of the Hudson's Bay Company. At the same time I suggested to Lord Bathurst to propose a bill to Parliament, which would enable the crown to grant a license of exclusive trade (saving the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company over their territory), as well over the country to the east as over that beyond the Rocky Mountains, and extending to the Pacific Ocean, so that any competition which was likely to be injurious to the peace of the country should be thereafter pre-



A modern Ojibway family.



Fort Simpson, long headquarters of Hudson's Bay Company in Mackenzie River.



vented. From these different arrangements sprung the present Hudson's Bay Company, which is more in fact a Canadian Company than an English company in its origin."

Ellice was testifying thirty-six years or more after the events he described, but his memory even of details seems to have been excellent in the long time he was on the stand. His foregoing statement reveals much and supports the logical conclusion that big business interests and the government were responsible for the consolidation of the two companies. The rivals combined, in accordance with government request, and they insured future immunity from competition by exacting from government a comprehensive and iron-bound grant.

Moreover, big business did not consult with the men in the field of either company. For several reasons, immediate consolidation was imperative. A year or more would have been necessary to get opinions or consent of North West wintering partners or profit-sharing Hudson's Bay traders. The agreement was signed, validly on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company, but on mere chance of putting it through on the part of the North West men.

Ellice testified that Bathurst consulted him in 1819 or 1820. It must have been the latter, after the death of Lord Selkirk in April, 1820. Any compromise probably would have been impossible so long as Selkirk lived. It has been pointed out that the death of Sir Alexander Mackenzie in March of that year also had a bearing on the matter because of his enmity toward Selkirk. In view of Mackenzie's many efforts to attain a monopoly and his clear-headedness, this scarcely seems possible.

It was in December, 1820, that Edward Ellice and Simon McGillivray, and probably his brother William McGillivray, began their negotiations with the Hudson's Bay Company in London. The agreement to unite was signed on March 26, 1821, which does not leave a long period for the ironing out of fundamental differences and the attainment of settlement between forces which were even then at one another's throats. There probably was a complete willingness on both sides to end the struggle. Lord Selkirk's emotions had prompted his actions from the beginning. Now that he was dead there was no incentive to

prove an ideal, although an ideal still persisted among the Nor'Westers in the field.

Early in 1820 both the Hudson's Bay and North West companies had petitioned the government to decide on the validity of the Hudson's Bay charter. Evidently, while Selkirk still lived, the struggle was being waged. His company asked not only that the boundaries of the chartered territory be determined but that government declare rights to the territory must be respected and "that means be taken to stop further outrages both within and without the aforesaid territory." None of these questions had been acted upon when union came, and, of course, they were dropped.

But the concern of government for peace and order in America is clearly evidenced in the covenant which the contracting parties signed, and this is perhaps an indication of pressure brought to bear. It provided for the administration of justice and for the gradual elimination of liquor in the Indian trade. The whole matter was confirmed by an act of Parliament which settled several important matters. The Hudson's Bay charter was guaranteed, provision was made for the administration of justice, and government was given the power to award an exclusive privilege to carry on the fur trade in any territory not granted previously to the Hudson's Bay Company and not belonging to the United States, to any foreign power or to British provinces in America.

This exclusive privilege was granted to the Hudson's Bay Company and to William and Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice for twenty-one years. It is a matter of vast importance in the story of the Hudson's Bay Company. Parliament declared its charter valid and permitted a lease to the united company of all the remainder of what is now Canada with the exception of the then existing eastern provinces. Oregon, Washington and parts of Idaho and Montana, at that time subject to joint occupancy by the United States and Great Britain, were not included, but they were occupied by the North West Company and became, in effect, Hudson's Bay territory.

In the agreement to unite, the name of the older company was



retained because of the value its charter might have. From that moment the united concern went on to the ultimate achievement and glory with which we associate "Hudson's Bay Company."

Whatever its success as a fur trading organization, the financial affairs of the North West Company were concluded under difficulties and at great loss, especially to men in the interior. The reasons are not clear but it seems to have been a question of speculation in London during a period of panic on the part of the firm of McGillivrays, Thain and Company, which was formed to conclude the business of the partnership in the matter of final outfits and fur sales. In 1825, following the death of William McGillivray in England, Simon McGillivray declared a suspension of payment and later assigned the assets to the creditors. The debts were nearly \$1,000,000 and the affair is much involved. The direct concern in our story is that, according to Alexander Ross, most of the Nor'Westers had been in the habit of depositing their savings with the insolvent firm and were heavy losers. Ross, who went to the Pacific coast with Astor's expedition, later joined the North West Company and continued in the Hudson's Bay service for many years, wrote that he lost £1,400, all he possessed.

Under the terms of the agreement signed in 1821, the net profits of the united concern were to be divided into one hundred shares. Forty of these shares were to become the property of the wintering partners of the North West Company and the traders of the Hudson's Bay. These forty shares were divided into eighty-five shares, two for each chief factor and one for each chief trader.

Of the remaining sixty shares, twenty were to go to William and Simon McGillivray and Edward Ellice, twenty to the Hudson's Bay Company, ten were to be invested by the united concern as an emergency fund, five compensated Ellice and the McGillivrays for the loss of their agency of the North West Company and five were to be used by the Hudson's Bay Company to fulfill an arrangement with the heirs of Lord Selkirk.

Coincident with the agreement, a deed poll was signed which named the chief factors and chief traders, men in the field who

were to have forty per cent of the profits of the new company. The capital for the enterprise was to be furnished by the Hudson's Bay Company and by the McGillivrays and Ellice, each contributing 200,000 pounds. The statement is frequently made that the two concerns contributed equally, and they did in so far as the money invested is concerned. But of the twenty-five chief factors, fifteen were Nor'Westers and ten were Hudson's Bay men, while of the chief traders seventeen were Nor'Westers and eleven were from the other company.

Nothing is more significant of the difference between the two rivals, and yet, although their union has been mentioned in many books, some purporting to be histories of the Hudson's Bay Company, the above facts have not been brought out. The statement has been made that factors and traders were chosen equally from both companies, but the lists are as follows, the names being spelled as they were in the Deed Poll:

## CHIEF FACTORS

*North West Company*

John Thomson  
 John Macdonald  
 James Leith  
 John Haldane  
 Alexander Stewart  
 John George McTavish  
 George Keith  
 John-Dugald Cameron  
 John Stuart  
 Edward Smith  
 John McLoughlin  
 James Keith  
 Angus Bethune  
 Donald Mackenzie  
 John McBean

*Hudson's Bay Company*

Thomas Vincent  
 James Bird  
 Colin Robertson  
 James Sutherland  
 John Clarke  
 John Charles  
 Alexander Kennedy  
 John Davis  
 Joseph Beioley  
 Alexander Christie

## CHIEF TRADERS

*North West Company*

William Mackintosh  
 Thomas McMurray  
 Donald Mackintosh  
 Allan Macdonnell  
 Hugh Faries  
 Roderic Mackenzie  
 Daniel Williams Harmon  
 John Warren Dease  
 Angus Cameron  
 Simon McGillivray  
 Joseph McGillivray  
 William Connelly  
 Peter Warren Dease  
 John Rowand  
 Joseph Felix La Rocque  
 James McMillan  
 Alexander Roderick McLeod

*Hudson's Bay Company*

Jacob Corrigan  
 John Peter Pruden  
 James Clouston  
 John Spencer  
 John Lee Lewes  
 Roderick Mackenzie  
 William Brown  
 Robert McVicar  
 John McLeod  
 Alexander McDonald  
 Andrew Stewart

Neither of the two Mackenzies listed as chief traders was Sir Alexander Mackenzie's cousin, Roderick, who built Fort Chipewyan in 1788.

Not only were thirty-two of the first fifty-three commissioned officers of the new Hudson's Bay Company former Nor'Westers but in the next ten years only two old Hudson's Bay men were promoted. In twenty years we find only three of the original Hudson's Bay chief traders so elevated, while Nor'Westers continued to rise to the highest ranks and assume the direction of the new enterprise.

We have seen how Edward Ellice, testifying before the Parliamentary Committee, said, "From these different arrangements sprung the present Hudson's Bay Company, which is more in fact a Canadian company than an English company in its origin."

But Ellice made a far more significant statement before he left the stand, one that has been completely overlooked by those who have attempted to tell the story of rivalry and union. There was

much opposition to the Hudson's Bay Company in that investigation in 1857, and one of the chief opponents of the Company, and a member of the investigating committee, was William Gladstone.

While Ellice was testifying, the Company's critics pressed him hard and dug up the Dobbs inquiry of more than a century before, and other charges made against the original "Gentlemen Adventurers." Ellice answered that he knew nothing of conditions then as he had no connection with them, and when the questions were pressed, he made this emphatic statement:

*"Nothing that previously took place in the affairs of the Hudson's Bay Company can at all have reference to what has been the conduct, or the management of the Company, for the last forty years."*

Such a statement could not have come from higher authority than from this veteran of more than half a century in the fur trade. He saw the North West-X Y conflict. He knew the North West Company at the zenith of its power. He was thoroughly familiar with the operation of the old Hudson's Bay Company as expressed in its feeble attempts to keep pace with the Montreal thunderbolts. He was largely instrumental in bringing the rivals together and in the formation of the resulting organization, and for more than forty years thereafter he continued in active direction of its affairs.

Of that band of "Adventurers of England," nothing survived in the Hudson's Bay Company of 1822. No courtiers sat at its board meetings. No grafting ship captains sailed into the west. No Richard Nortons or Joseph Colens or Humphrey Martens ruled the posts on the Bay. No London directors wrote futile pleas that the trade be pressed inland. Every vestige of the concern created by Charles II one hundred and fifty-one years before was wiped out.

But the men and the methods, the devotion and the energy, the gallant conquest and the will to succeed of the North West Company, these went on to remarkable mastery. "The Lords of the Lakes and Forests" had *not* "passed away." They only emerged from turmoil and violence to give us an inspiring example of integrity and honorable achievement.

## CHAPTER XXXII

A complete revolution in the operation of the Hudson's Bay Company came with union in 1821. When Selkirk gained control ten years earlier the men in the field were given one half the profits, but Selkirk and his lieutenants continued to direct affairs. They were generally on the spot, especially in the last days, but before Selkirk's entrance the entire control had rested with the "governor and committee" in London. We have seen how that system operated through a century and a half.

But in 1821, although the "commissioned officers" were given only forty instead of fifty per cent of the profits, they were accorded the entire operation of the fur trade. The "governor and committee" in London still functioned, buying supplies, shipping them to Canada and receiving and selling the furs. All financial arrangements were in their hands, yet so far as the conduct of the trade itself in America was concerned they had less actual control than had the Montreal agents of the North West Company.

The entire management rested with the "governor and council" of the Northern department, composed of a chief executive and the chief factors. If a chief trader were present at a meeting, he, too, had a vote. These men, meeting each summer, generally at Norway House just north of Lake Winnipeg, decided all questions and all matters of policy pertaining to the fur trade itself. They came from every part of the vast territory in which the company now had exclusive trading privileges. All had spent years in the country, knew the Indians and the transportation routes, the widely varying conditions in different districts of that broad land. Probably no more competent men were ever placed in charge of so large an enterprise. Among them were those who had been instrumental in carrying the North West Company to the zenith of its power, and the best of those who had fought for Selkirk. Some of the last were valuable men un-

doubtedly, but none ever rose to dominance in the service as did the Nor'Westers.

Such a system of active participation by owners and executives themselves had brought success to the Montreal organization, and now it was continued in the new Hudson's Bay Company. Chief factors and chief traders were directly interested in the Company. They received no salary, only a share in the profits. Achievement depended upon their efforts alone. And to each clerk was open the opportunity to rise to the top.

So much of the marvelous development of the Hudson's Bay Company after 1821 has been ascribed to George Simpson, no one seems to have considered that the most forceful executive in the world could have done nothing without thoroughly competent assistants. Simpson performed prodigious feats in traveling about that vast land, but rarely more than half the chief factors were able to attend the annual meeting and orders could be sent out only twice a year. A chief factor in charge of a district in Labrador, at the mouth of the Mackenzie River or out on the Columbia could not depend upon Simpson's direction or guidance. No one knew this better than Governor Simpson himself, and in one of the first meetings of the council a resolution was adopted that Dr. John McLoughlin was to "assume the direction of affairs in Columbia and issue such instructions as he may think necessary, attention to which was required from those to whom addressed." And to this was added "the same to extend to the Commanding Officers of every other district."

For many years Governor Simpson ruled from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to the center of Alaska and from San Francisco to Ungava, in a time when a canoe and dog team were the only means of transportation. But a combination of Napoleon, Julius Cæsar and Henry Ford could not have successfully conducted the fur trade over that great territory, even if he had traveled in an airplane, without a staff of competent, self-reliant men in charge of the posts.

George Simpson was a great executive, probably the greatest fur land has ever known, but writers have been so busy in praising him they have forgotten the material he had to work with, the machinery that was ready at hand in the North West organi-

zation, the active and efficient coöperation he was accorded, and the fact that the Hudson's Bay was without opposition for the first time in its history. And those same writers have left unsolved one of the greatest mysteries in the Hudson's Bay story—why was George Simpson selected as governor?

The mystery will not be entirely solved here. Few details of that selection have come to us. Writers have attempted to explain in the light of Simpson's tact, energy and executive ability, of his welding so quickly two forces which had just been battling furiously, of the things he accomplished and the manner of his accomplishment.

But no one was certain of those qualities in 1821. Simpson had been in America less than a year. He was only twenty-two years old when he went to Athabasca with a small outfit to oppose the pick of the Nor'Westers. We are not even sure he was successful as a fur trader in that, his first, experience. If he had been, news of it could not have reached London before his appointment. He was only a clerk in Selkirk's Hudson's Bay Company, but a year later he was governor of half the continent and head of the entire British fur trade in America.

Colin Robertson, attending that first gathering of the opposing forces in Fort William in July, 1821, wrote, "Mr. Simpson is one of the most pleasant little men I ever met. He is full of spirit, can see no difficulties and is ambition itself."

That explains little or nothing. Simpson was barely more than a youth when he left his desk in the London office of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1820. Undoubtedly he had displayed certain qualities, but it is difficult to conceive that hard-headed business men in England found therein the proof that he was fit to assume such a task. Men have pointed out that a comparative stranger to the warring factions was essential, which is true but does not answer our question.

We have one revealing glimpse of that time in the diary of Nicholas Garry, a member of the committee of the Hudson's Bay Company in London, who, so far as we know, was the first executive, except Selkirk, who ever visited the interior of Rupert's Land. Later he became deputy governor of the Company. In 1821 he was chosen to go to Fort William and Red River to

inaugurate formally the newly created organization. His choice for so important a mission was determined by the fact, as he himself records, that he was the only unmarried member of the committee.

Garry left a diary, first made public thirty years ago, which presents him as the typical insular Britisher. He was most naïve in his wonderment upon beholding new sights and people, and quite favorably impressed by his entertainment in New York and by the Nor'Westers in Montreal. But when he started westward in a canoe he began to find those same Nor'Westers not so friendly. His diary is maddening. He tells of flowers and lakes and rivers and his own discomfort from rain and mosquitoes, but gives only hints as to the real business and its trend.

He arrived at Fort William on July 1st and met many of the North West partners. Simon McGillivray had accompanied him, and McGillivray had his hands full in explaining what he and Edward Ellice had done in London. But on July 11 McGillivray reported to Garry that the partners were ready to sign the covenant. This was done by at least ten chief factors and eleven chief traders, though Garry's lists are badly mixed. Garry then tried to call a council to begin arrangements for the year, but McGillivray blocked that and after several days it was discovered that even Garry had no power outside the limits of Rupert's Land. But he did assign men to their posts, and thereby aroused the indignation of old Hudson's Bay men. Robertson wrote that Simpson felt "a good deal hurt at the way Mr. Garry made the appointments," and Robertson and John Clarke were incensed at the preference shown the Nor'Westers. "The comfortable districts were set aside for the friends of the N.W.C.," Robertson wrote. "One cannot but admire the staunchness of those old Northwest partners."

Robertson and Clarke were cordially hated by their late opponents and, undoubtedly to promote peace, Clarke was sent to Montreal "for his health," although he was perfectly well. Loyal Hudson's Bay men must have felt deeply wronged to see John George McTavish placed in charge of the most famous of all their posts, York Factory.

Garry's diary is silent on all this. July 10th he made one entry,



"Discussion without end," but no more until July 21st, when he departed for Red River. But a number of papers found with his diary disclose several facts, all most important. One gives this table:

*Shares*

N.W.Co.	15	Chief Factors .....	30
	17	Chief Traders .....	17
	3	retired shares .....	3
			—
			50

*Shares*

H.B.Co.	10	Chief Factors .....	20
	11	Chief Traders .....	11
	4	retired shares .....	4
			—
			35

Accompanying this is Garry's explanation: "The reason for dividing into 85 shares was with a view to provide for the whole of the partners of the N. W. Company who had claims as partners."

Not all the old Nor'Westers came into the new concern. Some refused. Some probably were frozen out. That is why there was "discussion without end," but Garry's explanation has a far greater bearing on our story. The union of the two companies, it has always been said, was on equal terms. Each did contribute an equal amount of capital, but of the forty shares set aside for the men in the field, the North West partners held 59 per cent and the Hudson's Bay employees 41.

Thus, as the Garry papers disclose, the union was not on equal terms, but with a preponderance of ownership on the side of the North West Company and a like advantage in voting power in the actual conduct of the fur trade. It was probably to this fact that Edward Ellice referred many years later when he testified before a Parliamentary committee that the new Hudson's Bay was, in effect, more a Canadian than an English company. What really happened was this: The Nor'Westers owned

53.6 per cent of the new Hudson's Bay Company, the old concern came out of the negotiations with 46.4 per cent. All history has successfully evaded that fact.

But in this fact, and also in the Garry diary, we gain some light on the selection of Simpson. One of the papers published with the diary is an extract from a letter to Governor William Williams, who had succeeded Semple and had taken the aggressive measures against the Nor'Westers at Grand Rapids. He was still in office, still governor of the Hudson's Bay in America, and Garry wrote him that under the new régime he had been appointed governor of the Northern Department, which had supreme control. Garry stated further that Simpson had been appointed governor of the Southern Department, with headquarters at Moose Factory, and that his commission had been dated a day later than that of Williams so that, if they should come to the same council, Williams would have precedence.

There the official explanation ends. But Governor Williams was anathema to the Nor'Westers. He had been as aggressive and as ruthless as themselves in the recent warfare. He was held responsible for the death of Benjamin Frobisher, and it must be remembered that, no matter how violent either side became, each believed it was in the right.

But later Garry unburdened himself in his diary, rather ambiguously but in a revealing manner. He went on to Red River from Fort William, and Simon McGillivray followed. The diary hints at a growing feud between the two. Garry proceeded to York Factory to sail on a Company ship to England, and McGillivray still followed. On the date of sailing, Garry wrote that McGillivray had demanded to know what disposal had been made of Williams. It is most evident that the Nor'Westers would have none of him. Garry was in a quandary. He admired Williams. He wrote that, if Williams had not gone to Red River as Semple's successor, the North West Company would have built an opposition post beside York Factory and "would eventually have driven the Hudson's Bay out of the field; the old officers of the company being a pusillanimous, heartless set of men and quite unfit for opposition, though many of them are good traders."

That is a startling admission for a Selkirk Hudson's Bay man

to make, and it explains a great deal. It even indicates an admission, on the part of the Hudson's Bay confrères in London the previous winter, that their men did not compare in efficiency with the Nor'Westers. But Garry's diary explains still more about Simpson. He wrote under great emotional stress. He admired Williams so greatly he did not have the heart to tell him until the last moment that he could not be governor of the new company. He even determined that he would not give in to McGillivray. And then, in a heart-to-heart talk with Williams, he found that gentleman more than willing to accept the Southern Department, to which he was sent.

Therein, probably, lies the reason for the selection of Simpson as overlord of fur land. The old Hudson's Bay men had little faith in its men in the field. It chose Williams first, Simpson for a subordinate position. The Nor'Westers, through the pugnacious McGillivray, would have none of Williams. They would accept Simpson, and thus he was made governor. He became a great executive, but we are left with a feeling that his selection was partly a fortunate accident, and partly due to the Nor'Westers themselves.

Garry's outburst against the old Hudson's Bay men is most interesting. It indicates not only a lack of faith in its men on the part of the old Hudson's Bay Company but a reason for the concession to the Nor'Westers in an unequal division of the council of Rupert's Land. If the fur trade were to be conducted successfully, and that was the basic reason for union, it had to be in the hands of the most efficient men. That this was the eventual outcome is shown in the gradual elimination of many of those original Hudson's Bay chief factors and chief traders. Fifteen years later only six or seven of the first twenty-one remained, while the company's rolls were made up of names familiar to any one who has followed the story of the North West Company.

For all that Garry's diary discloses, we still must be content with little more than a surmise as to the emotional upheaval occasioned by the union. All winter those men had fought, for fur in the north, for each slight advantage around a table in London, and now they were united to carry on the fur trade. We can understand how the business leaders were able to accom-

plish this without too much emotion. For the men in the field it was a far different matter. Theirs had been the bitterness and the hatred. They had seen men killed, friends and even relatives. All the fierce clan feeling of the Highlanders had been developed, and the clans did not readily forgive or forget.

Governor Simpson plunged at once into the task of bringing the hostile factions into accord. Later he wrote to Andrew Colvile, Selkirk's brother-in-law, that he accomplished much by disregarding his own comfort, and in the ensuing winter he traveled to the posts in Manitoba to visit "our fresh allies, who received me with politeness and attention." Early in the fall of 1822 he started to Athabasca, went down to Great Slave Lake, up the Peace, across to Lesser Slave Lake and back along the Saskatchewan. The object, he wrote to London, was to "check abuses which nothing but my own presence can stop and to get rid of several establishments which are a heavy burden."

Evidently he succeeded, for in June, 1823, he was able to write, "They are no longer the suspicious, dissatisfied men they have been." Undoubtedly Simpson was largely responsible for a decrease in friction. He was affable, energetic, actuated only by a determination to make the new organization successful. Nor'Westers recognized that union was the sensible step to take, but many years were required to wipe out traces of the spirit engendered in the days before 1821. Some remained bitter to the end, and as the years passed and the Montreal men increased their power and monopolized more and more the best positions, the effects of the former struggle were still to be seen in appointments.

Alexander Caulfield Anderson, who entered the service in 1831, wrote of those days. His book was never published but the manuscript is in the British Columbia Provincial Library. He said that even when he entered the service in 1831 the old animosities were still occasionally in evidence, although both sides admitted that common sense called for union. Evidently he found the subject a delicate one, and, with a Hudson's Bay man's usual reticence in discussing family matters, indicated that it was not one to be aired even many years afterward. He did disclose one interesting feature that has not come to light else-

where. Hudson's Bay men wore a light blue uniform and were referred to as the "Blues," while the old Nor'Westers wore gray uniforms and were called the "Grays." How long this custom continued, Anderson did not tell, but, knowing some of those men as we do, we can imagine the uniform being worn to the end.

Governor Simpson was responsible for much of the elimination of hostility. He was a prolific letter writer, and he did not confine his letters to business but took pains to tell men in distant posts the personal gossip of headquarters and of their friends. His tact was exceptional, his letters charming, and he backed up this attitude with deeds. One of the early examples of this was his treatment of Samuel Black, the aggressive Nor'Wester whom he had subdued at Fort Chipewyan in that last winter of conflict. Black, for all his recklessness, was a fine character and popular with his old friends in the North West Company. Because of his part in the Athabasca campaigns, Nor'Westers probably expected he would receive scant attention. But the next year he was made chief trader and in 1824 was chosen to head an exploring party sent up the Finlay River. Black was not an astronomer and could not survey, but his assignment won him over and also pleased his friends. In 1838 he became a chief factor.

Black is a splendid example of the metamorphosis of even the more violent Nor'Westers. A few years after union, when he was in charge of a post in British Columbia, David Douglas, the wandering botanist, became his guest. One night after dinner, and both had been drinking, Douglas made the statement that "the Hudson's Bay Company did not have a soul above a beaver skin." Black, as loyal now to the new organization as he had been to the old, challenged the botanist to a duel, but the next morning the matter was forgotten.

As the years passed, the power of the old Nor'Westers grew. Recently a copy of the minutes of council of 1825 was unearthed in a collection of papers left by Malcolm McLeod, son of an early chief trader, in which McLeod noted after each name in the annual assignments whether a man's origin was in the North West or old Hudson's Bay Company. He made some errors but

his lists show that in 1826 every chief factor, chief trader and clerk west of the Rocky Mountains was from the Montreal organization.

The most complex and far reaching department of the Hudson's Bay Company was built up there, and the active executives were Dr. John McLoughlin, James Douglas, William Connolly, Peter Warren Dease, Peter Skene Ogden, Simon McGillivray, Alexander Roderick McLeod, Samuel Black, Archibald MacDonald and John E. Harriot. All except the last two were former Nor'Westers. McLoughlin, one of the finest characters in the history of the Hudson's Bay Company, is now called the "father of Oregon." Douglas became chief of the department, Lieutenant Governor of British Columbia, and was knighted. Yet so firmly have the Hudson's Bay legends been established, so thoroughly have historians absorbed the idea that the Nor'Westers were villains, a recent detailed history of Oregon makes this statement: "The personnel of the organization (the Hudson's Bay Company) was distinctly superior to that of the undisciplined Astorians or dissolute Northwesters; and there were leaders of conspicuous ability."

Those old Nor'Westers were becoming a vital part of the new Hudson's Bay Company. Loyalty was inbred in a clansman. Aggressiveness was turned to the extension and perfection of the fur trade. And as they saw that trade expand, as they participated in the development of a vast and efficient machine, the Hudson's Bay Company became their own, product of their toil, sacrifice and devotion.

But they hoarded its glory, kept to themselves the thing which they had built. More than ever, secrecy became an inherent part of the fur trade. The Nor'Westers had learned a lesson when they had answered Selkirk's questions. Never again were they to talk freely, and thereby they kept hidden the beauty which grew from bloody conflict. They were a clan again, united, pressing always toward a single goal. It is only by prying deeply or through chance glimpses that we can discover the spiritual development which is the crowning achievement of the Hudson's Bay Company.

## CHAPTER XXXIII

Governor Simpson's task of obtaining an emotional adjustment was great but at the same time he was faced with the necessity of perfecting an efficient physical machine.

First of all, trade goods could now be brought in through Hudson's Bay and the long canoe route from Montreal was no longer necessary. Connected with this was the removal of fur land headquarters from Fort William on Lake Superior to a central position on the main line of communication, and this was Jack River post of the Hudson's Bay Company, now called Norway House, just above the north end of Lake Winnipeg. York Factory, long the center of Hudson's Bay activities, likewise ceased to be a capital but was immediately developed as the big shipping depot.

These were natural steps. Another was the elimination of a large number of posts, and this undoubtedly released many clerks and minor employees. For years both companies had built forts side by side until there was a duplication from the Rocky Mountains east to Lake Nipigon. Not only could half of these now be done away with but some posts had been established merely because of competition and were no longer necessary.

Governor Simpson began at once to visit as many places as possible east of the Rocky Mountains. In 1824 he went across to the Pacific coast, where he discovered that, while the Hudson's Bay controlled the trade inland, independent American ships controlled the coast. Legally, the Americans were within their rights, but their presence did not accord with the Hudson's Bay idea of a continent-wide monopoly. Simpson immediately ordered exploratory expeditions and as a result Fort Langley was built near the mouth of the Fraser River in 1828. In 1830 Fort Simpson, named for the governor, was erected on the coast just south of the Russian Alaska possessions and four years later Peter Skene Ogden started to build on the Stikine, still farther north.

The Russians forcibly drove him out, thereby violating a recent treaty, and as a result of a claim for damages the Hudson's Bay was able to lease from the Russians a strip of coast to Mt. Fairweather on the sixtieth parallel. Fort McLoughlin had been built just north of Milbank Sound in 1834.

Chief Factor McLoughlin had greatly extended the old North West trade below the Columbia by means of large trapping parties sent out under Peter Skene Ogden, John Work and others. Thus the Hudson's Bay Company, less than two decades after union, was in possession of the Pacific coast from San Francisco to the northern end of what is now called Southeastern Alaska.

Through McLoughlin's energetic activities, Hudson's Bay trapping parties also had worked eastward across the Rockies into Montana and southeast into Wyoming, Colorado, Nevada, Utah and throughout the whole northern half of California. Soon an agreement was entered into with the Spaniards and a post was established in San Francisco, where McLoughlin's son-in-law was in charge and where the company owned 1,000 acres in what is now the coast metropolis. It reached into the Pacific and established a station in the Hawaiian Islands.

The entire complexion of the fur trade on the west coast was wholly foreign to that east of the Rockies. South and east of the Columbia, large parties of white and half-breed trappers were sent out in organized squadrons. To the north the trade was with Indians but they were a treacherous lot and in addition to its posts the company used ships. These sailed up and down the coast, stopping off the large villages and permitting only a few natives on board at a time. The *Tonquin* was not forgotten. A schooner was built soon after union, more vessels followed, and later the Hudson's Bay introduced to the Pacific coast its first steamship, the *Beaver*, which only recently disappeared beneath the waves just outside Vancouver Harbor.

It was necessary, too, on the west side of the mountains, to begin cultivation of the soil. This also was entirely foreign to the Company's policy in the east and north. But the dependence upon Indians for provisions, the great expense of shipping flour from England and a later agreement to furnish the Russians with



that commodity demanded wheat raising. "I would not have encouraged farming in this country but it was impossible to carry on the trade without it," Dr. McLoughlin once wrote.

Horses also were needed in large numbers, and the raising of cattle soon began. Salmon filled the rivers each fall and were salted in barrels as a food supply for the many posts. This quickly developed into a business and fish were shipped to the Hawaiian Islands and to England. A saw mill was built and lumber became an export commodity.

Americans also were engaging in the inland fur trade, competing with the Hudson's Bay from Arizona north to the international boundary. Settlers began to arrive over the Oregon Trail. The inevitable political complications followed and resulted in the final withdrawal of the Hudson's Bay Company to the north side of the forty-ninth parallel. It is vastly interesting, the story of Hudson's Bay development west of the mountains. The Company tried desperately to make all that territory British. But the story reaches far beyond the fur trade and embraces only a brief, though important, episode in the life of the Company. And it cannot be told briefly.

It is on the east side of the Rockies, in the great plains country, in the enormous basin of the Mackenzie, in the huge swamp and forest country surrounding Hudson Bay, and in Labrador and Ungava, that the fur trade attained its greatest development, that the Hudson's Bay Company became a permanent institution, and in which it made the history and developed the spirit and prestige for which it is justly famous. A single purpose prevailed there, and as such it endured.

East of the Rockies that single purpose could prevail. Agriculture and shipping and lumber and the salting of fish did not occupy the traders or introduce new interests and invite settlers. For half a century the gathering of pelts was the sole interest. The dominance of the Company became complete. It ruled across five thousand miles of wilderness and left an astounding record of justice and integrity and accomplishment.

Customs of trade were only a development of those employed before union. The barter system was practically unknown. Indians came to a post in the fall, received an outfit of goods

and went into the forest for the winter. In the spring they returned with their fur, settled their "debt," and spent the summer in idleness. Competition was a thing of the past and it was not necessary to keep a large staff of men to visit the hunters during the winter for fear some rival would get pelts necessary to liquidate the debts.

That lack of competition had a marvelous effect on the fur trade. The Indian was no longer subjected to the evil effects of rivalry. He did not see white men struggle for his favor. He no longer could get "debt" from one trader and sell his furs to another. He ceased to get twice what his pelts were worth, and he soon learned that he must live without liquor.

These things could not come all at once, and therein lay a greater task for the old Nor'Westers than for Simpson. They came in direct contact with the Indians. Theirs was the mission of explaining the new system, of refusing liquor, and it was not entirely because they had monopoly as a weapon that they succeeded. The natives had been demoralized by the fierce rivalry of the preceding ten years. They had never known exclusive trade, and many of them, especially on the plains, were still an independent and often hostile people.

The firmness, personal courage and understanding of Indian character which had contributed so largely to North West Company success now was devoted to the Hudson's Bay. Practically nothing has come to us of the difficulties of that period, and they must have been great. We do know the results. In a remarkably short time order was achieved, the trade stabilized and expansion begun.

Our first detailed record is in the recently discovered minutes of council for 1825. These are not the official minutes but a condensed version made by John George McTavish, evidently for his own guidance. They indicate the early trend of policy, detail some important steps, give the assignment of men to posts and record interesting events. Among the last is a final glimpse of W. F. Wentzel, the old North West clerk who wrote so many letters from Fort Chipewyan. He had not been advanced after union and that year his request to be permitted to retire was granted.

Some of McTavish's notes are so short their meaning is not clear, as when he says several men were "censured for not addressing the governor." Officers evidently did not obey orders from the council in those reconstruction days, for the private accounts of several are charged with certain amounts because of expense incurred in violation of instructions. An implication that John Clarke, Selkirk's leader in the Athabasca campaigns, was still unpopular may be found in the following: "John Clarke, C.F., private account to be charged with all expenses attending loss of property ingoing, having contravened Resolution 139 of 1823."

It was the 1825 council that began to eliminate the use of rum. McTavish's note on the resolution reads: "Indians: Industry encouraged, vice repressed and morality inculcated. Spirituous Liquor gradually discontinued & ammunition supplied even to those not possessed of means. Beaver hunting in summer discouraged. Killing small furs in season recommended."

Efficiency made its appearance. Posts were ordered to furnish a register of Indians, the country hunted and the character and habits of the natives. A journal was to be kept and annual reports made on state of resources, hands employed, families supported, on conduct and character of servants and clerks, on climate, soil and vegetable production. A comparative statement of returns was ordered and suggestions for improvement requested. A distinct provisions account for officers and servants was to be kept.

The Nor'Westers once ordered that men should take half-breed and not native women as a means to cut down the expense of maintaining so many women and children at the posts. The "country marriage" had long been a common practice, and now a further step was taken to reduce costs to the Hudson's Bay Company, which shouldered the care of dependents. Resolution 124 read:

"Officers, clerks and servants hereafter not permitted to take women without making reasonable provision for women and children during their residence and after departure hence. Those retiring to make provision according to means. Every facility to be given such who wish to remove their children from country."

The council of 1825 evidently was swept by a passion for reform. McTavish's condensed version of the last six resolutions adopted reads thus: "Divine services to be read Sundays. Religious books to be furnished. Immoral habits checked—opposite encouraged. Premiums for Juvenile rivalry. Women and children to be always addressed in English or French. Parents to instruct their children in ABC."

In the 1825 minutes we find, too, the beginnings of a new system of transport which grew into remarkable efficiency. The Nor'Westers had been compelled to transport goods from Rainy Lake to Great Slave Lake in a season, and sometimes ice prevented the canoes getting through. Now, with York Factory the distributing point, so long a journey was eliminated, but further insurance was provided, and also the necessary staff was cut down, by having the Mackenzie river furs brought only as far as Methye portage and the goods taken back from there. This went into effect in 1825.

The minutes in council are still on file in London but have not been made public. After the condensed minutes of 1825, we must wait five years for our next glimpse of the inner workings of the Company's machinery. A few years ago Isaac Cowie, who entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company before its charter was surrendered, presented a copy of the minutes from 1830 to 1843 to the North Dakota Historical Society for publication. "During this fourteen-year period," Cowie wrote, "the fur trade may be said to have reached the zenith of its progress. Its decline set in with the loss of its guiding mind and hand in the death, in 1860, of its greatest governor, Sir George Simpson, followed by the appointment of a greenhorn governor, an outsider named Alexander Grant Dallas."

The first business before a council, Cowie said, was the reading of the "general letter" from the governor and committee in London. This was "couched in terms so cordially courteous as to lead each of the Chief Factors and Chief Traders to feel that he was not only an associate in business but a personal friend of 'their Honors,' the members of the committee."

"The Northern Department Council," Cowie wrote, "besides

regulating and directing the trade, was vested with vast power to govern the chartered territories and make laws, not inconsistent with those of England of 1670, under which the country was ruled."

The minutes tell how long most of the original twenty-five chief factors and twenty-eight chief traders remained actively in the company, although they are most disappointing because they rarely give details. No heed is taken, for instance, of the death of Samuel Black, when that turbulent Nor'Wester, now become a loyal Hudson's Bay man and chief factor in charge of a post in British Columbia, was shot by an Indian as he sat in his room one night. We learn nothing of that lone Yankee, Daniel Williams Harmon, who became a chief trader in 1821 and was at Rainy Lake the next year. Of the ten original chief factors from the old Hudson's Bay Company, only John Charles, Alexander Christie and Joseph Beioley continued long in active service.

John Clarke, the pugnacious ex-Nor'Wester, soon disappeared. Evidently the dislike of his early Montreal associates was his undoing. Colin Robertson took a furlough, and in 1836 was granted an extension, but with the proviso that if he were not back the next April "he will be considered as having retired from the Fur Trade." He is not mentioned again until 1840, when £300 was set aside as the nucleus of a pensions fund. The first payment from this was of one hundred pounds to Colin Robertson, "late chief factor."

Steps were taken early to conserve fur bearing animals. In the Columbia district this was not possible. Competition with the Americans was too strong, and the big hunting parties practically denuded a country as they passed through it. But beaver were plentiful in the mountains and on west to the coast. In 1826 Peter Skene Ogden wrote that the valley of Snake River was "richer in beaver than any he had seen." The beaver was also a better quality. One year the Hudson's Bay obtained 26,735 skins from the Pacific slope, but intensive trapping soon had its effects. In 1845 the Hudson's Bay shipments from the Columbia were down to 17,290 skins, and in 1848 to 12,356. One

of the peaks in the beaver trade was reached in 1837, when the total obtained by the Hudson's Bay Company was 57,393 beaver.

But east of the mountains, where competition had existed for so long, and where the beaver epidemic of 1804 had prevailed, the staple of the fur trade had become alarmingly scarce. Almost at once steps were taken to curtail the taking of skins and a maximum was established for each district. Saskatchewan was granted the greatest number with 5,500. York and Churchill were limited to 300 skins, Norway House to twenty.

Most evidently this quota was not closely observed. Each year it was repeated in the minutes, and then, in 1833, Resolution 92 read: "That gentlemen in charge of districts and posts such as are exposed to opposition exert their utmost efforts in discouraging the hunting of cub beaver and beaver out of season and that no beaver traps be issued from the depot except for sale to the Piegan Indians. . . ."

Each fur trader, of course, sought to make good returns, and if an Indian brought in a beaver skin it was "traded." The situation became so serious that in 1841 the council decided that only half the number of skins received in the outfit of 1839 be purchased in each of the next three years. To enforce this rule, it was ordered that any officer failing to comply would be retired from the service. As an inducement to the Indians, a premium was given on small furs to any hunter who did not kill beaver.

In 1833 it was decided that requisitions from England for outfit 1835 should not exceed £15,000. Outfit 1837 was not to exceed £28,000 and outfit 1838 no more than £25,000. The trade was being systematized, made efficient. Dividends were certain under monopoly. In 1842 the Company told Parliament that after union semi-annual payments of five per cent were made, with a bonus of ten per cent from 1828 to 1832. This was reduced to six per cent until 1841, when no bonus was paid.

On the Pacific the system of posts and trading ships drove Americans from the sea but competition was strong with the Americans inland. McLoughlin's policy was to undersell where possible, although the American's price for beaver was five dollars and the Hudson's Bay only one or two. In 1833 an agreement

was reached with the American Fur Trading Company whereby trapping and trading limits were defined, but many independent American traders and trappers pressed through to the Pacific coast.

A different system was adopted along what is now the Minnesota border. Beginning in 1835, the American Fur Company was paid £300 annually for six or seven years for withdrawing its posts in that district. Later a retired member of the American Fur Company, who had made the original agreement, began operations independently in Minnesota, and it was ruled that he be opposed "with utmost vigor."

Out in the plains country there was much opposition from Americans, who had a distinct advantage in the Missouri River steamship transportation. Also, the liquor laws were successfully evaded in the United States and much rum found its way across the border. The Hudson's Bay Company, of course, met this with liquor. Nothing else was possible. Competition always meant liquor.

Elsewhere, the Company was not cutting down the use of rum so sharply as is generally believed. Although a decrease in quantity was ordered in 1825, it was not until 1838 that the following resolution was adopted: "That liquor be not made an article of trade or medium of barter with Indians for furs in any part of the country and that not more than 2 Gallons of spirituous Liquor and 4 gallons of Wine be sold at the depots to any individual in the company's service of what rank soever he may be." That same year it was recited that the "intemperate habits" of a chief trader, who was named, "having of late become so notorious as to be the subject of general remark among all classes throughout the country," he be ordered to appear for trial.

The minutes of 1839 record that on January 14, 1839, Governor Simpson had written heads of posts that the use of liquor was to be stopped "in Rainy Lake and Jack River Departments, at the Posts of Cumberland and Moose Lake, and in the Saskatchewan Department at posts on Shoal River and Manitobah, in the Swan River Department, and at the Posts of Oxford and Island Lake in the York Department." Many of these posts were

in the interior and had been without opposition for eighteen years.

In 1841 it was recorded that, because of opposition from Americans, the supply of wild rice from Rainy Lake had been cut fifty per cent, and it was ordered that eight kegs of rum be sent there. This order was repeated the next year. But not only in meeting competition did the company use liquor. It was not until 1841 that it ceased providing rum for Indians at York Factory, Fort Churchill and Fort Severn.

Reasons for this delay of two decades in stopping the practice are not given. It must be remembered, however, that the Indians had been accustomed to liquor for generations, and the practice could not be broken off too suddenly without causing serious trouble. Further, the amount had undoubtedly been cut down to a mere shadow of the quantities employed in the days previous to 1821. What the company did in the interior in 1841 was probably to discontinue entirely the gift of small quantities once or twice a year.

It is generally believed that the Hudson's Bay rule after 1821 was free from Indian troubles. This is not entirely true. In 1823 natives attacked Fort St. John on the upper Peace River and killed Guy Hughes and four of his men. The post was abandoned. A corner of the prairies, that north of the boundary and east of the Rockies on the headwaters of the South Saskatchewan, was never permanently occupied. A Hudson's Bay party was massacred in that district in the eighteenth century. The Nor'Westers attempted it later, but the Blackfeet, Piegan and Blood Indians were too hostile.

In 1822 the new Hudson's Bay Company made a more determined effort and Donald Mackenzie, brother of Roderick and cousin of Sir Alexander, was placed in charge. Due to his energy and executive ability, the North West Company had made a success of the Columbia trade and now he took one hundred men into the home of the Blackfeet. It was largely a meat depot, few furs were obtained, and the post was subject to constant attacks by the Indians. A number of men were killed and, because of the expense and poor returns, the district was abandoned



after three or four years. As late as 1857 this was still dangerous territory for white men.

In the mountains of Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming and California encounters with Indians were frequent. John Work's letters several times expressed surprise that he still retained his scalp. In this huge district the hunting policy was antagonistic to the native. Alexander Ross, Peter Skene Ogden and John Work led large parties of white, half-breed and Iroquois hunters on incredible journeys. "I extended my trails by far greater distance to the Gulph of California but found beaver very scarce," Ogden wrote in 1831.

These large parties were in constant competition with similar parties of Americans and their method of catching all the beaver in sight naturally aroused hostility, and conflicts were not infrequent. But whereas American leadership and control was constantly changing, the Hudson's Bay activities were permanent, and McLoughlin, stern but just, adopted reprisals. In 1828 he punished a band of Indians that had murdered and robbed a party of Americans, and recovered their fur. As a result of this policy, the Hudson's Bay eventually won to a position of control, and Americans sometimes adopted the red cap of the British company as a protection.

The Pacific coast Indians always were bad. Soon after 1821 a Company ship was wrecked at the mouth of the Columbia and her captain and twenty-six men were murdered on reaching shore. All the way to Fort Taku, near the modern Juneau, it was necessary to maintain a constant guard, and even then Company men were killed. After the American ships were driven out, some of the posts in both Alaska and British Columbia were abandoned because of hostility. The Fort Rupert village at the north end of Vancouver Island was shelled as a disciplinary measure. As late as 1870, shipwrecked sailors were murdered when they reached shore on the west coast.

But east of the Rockies, where competition did not exist, a remarkable peace prevailed. Comparison with what happened south of the boundary is often made and the policy of the Hudson's Bay Company is held up as a marvelous example of just dealings with, and control over, the Indians. The justice and

control are indisputable, but it must be remembered that the situation in the United States was entirely different. Trade was free in the south, which meant unscrupulous competition and all the evils attending the North West-X Y conflict and the Hudson's Bay-North West struggle, and worse. Liquor was never eliminated.

Other conditions were diametrically opposed to those in Canada. In the great plains country, extending from the Mississippi River to the mountains, the buffalo permitted an independence on the part of the Indian and also a massing of natives in large bands with consequent perfection of tribal government. No monopoly in trade existed, no restrictions in the extension of settlement. Homeseekers pressed forward. The Indian and the buffalo had to go. We can express maudlin sympathy and regret at this late date, but then a social and economic force was at work no different than similar forces operating since the world began.

In Canada a trade monopoly was both legal and actual, a condition which eliminated a large part of the cause of Indian troubles. For half a century after union the settler did not complicate matters for the Hudson's Bay Company, and basically the settler has always been the Indian's greatest foe. In what is now Canada, the white trapper, too, was not a factor. The Indian was left in undisputed possession, permitted undisturbed pursuit of his natural vocation.

Further, the Indians were scattered, by lack of easy food supplies, over vast areas. Except in the plains country, tribal government was undeveloped. It was possible for the Hudson's Bay Company to deal with the individual hunter. The "debt" system permitted vast control. The Indian was forced to accede to the Hudson's Bay policy or go without necessities.

An opportunity to oppress the natives, to exact the full measure of monopoly, was open to the Hudson's Bay, and it has been freely charged that the Company grasped it. But no Scotchman ever killed a bird that produced valuable eggs. It would have been only folly for the Company to oppress the natives. The Company was in the business of getting fur, and Indians were necessary to gather that fur. Common sense dictated a just treat-

ment of an inferior people. A contented Indian is a good hunter. An Indian with a grievance will not stir from his wigwam. The fur trader knows this. The critic and the sentimentalist do not.

But, while common sense and business expediency dictated the policy of the company, the fact remains that a benevolent attitude was developed. Given fair treatment and no opportunity to be dishonest, the Indian becomes a rather likable chap. His very childishness is appealing and arouses a paternal instinct. Isolate a lonely white man with a band of people who, while efficient as hunters, are helpless in the conduct of common business dealings, and one of two things happens. That lonely man finds his charges imbecile and cheats them, or his protective instincts are aroused. The Hudson's Bay Company took extreme care to select the latter class, and from that policy grew a relationship between the white race and an inferior people which, for sheer beauty, has not been equalled elsewhere on this earth.

## CHAPTER XXXIV

The Hudson's Bay Company has always been considered an organization manned by Scotchmen, but it was almost purely English until 1810. Selkirk, in engaging Colin Robertson and a few others, introduced the first Highlanders. For many years the Company had been employing Orkney men, but only as laborers. Most of them were illiterate and few rose in the service. But Selkirk, patterning in many ways after the Nor'Westers, recognized the value of courageous, resolute men of better families, those with an education and superior intelligence.

It was the man of this type who did the best work for the Hudson's Bay Company before union, and who survived the unequal assignment of chief factors and chief traders and the subsequent elimination of the unfit in the swift development of an efficient organization under Simpson. The Nor'Westers, of course, with their chief factors and chief traders, presented an almost unbroken Highland front, and the peculiar adaptability of the Scotch as fur traders kept them in the lead for nearly a century. Dr. George Bryce estimated that in the first fifty years after union the commissioned officers ranked as follows: French Canadian, 11; Irish, 22; English, 59; Scotch, 171.

In the early minutes of the Company we begin to find in the lists of clerks a repetition of familiar North West names, sometimes with "Jr." after them. Irving may have said that the "Lords of the Lakes and Forests have passed away," but the McGillivrays, McTavishes, Mackenzies, McLoughlins and McLeods continued in the fur trade.

Many of these young clerks, of course, were sons of Indian or half-breed women, and their employment undoubtedly was due in many instances to the father's influence. In the last century of the Hudson's Bay Company's existence some of these men of mixed blood became valuable employees in responsible positions. Fur land dynasties were established. Sons of officers and half-

breed women received college educations and returned to the service and success. But, as a rule, the man of mixed blood did not attain prominence.

Early in the history of the new Company a policy was inaugurated which still is in force, and which was largely responsible for the building of the splendid personnel of later years. Whether Governor Simpson originated the idea is not known, but he was greatly interested in the plan and undoubtedly developed it. In 1839 we find in the minutes the first reference to an "apprentice clerk."

Dr. Johnson is credited with the remark that if you want to make anything of a Scotchman you must catch him when very young. Perhaps Simpson had read that. At least he believed it, for the Hudson's Bay Company began to catch young Scotchmen. They brought them over as boys, trained them, gave them responsibility, and those boys became the Hudson's Bay Company. Not all were Scotch. The English shareholders had influence, of course, and selected sons of friends, but Scotch names continued to predominate in the muster roll, as is shown by the MacIntyres and Rosses and Andersons and Macfarlanes and McDonalds and McTavishes who ruled in the seventies and eighties.

The method of selection, and the object, is best described by the statement of Edward Ellice before the Parliamentary Committee in 1857, when he said:

"I took great care to send out the best men we could find, principally from the North of Scotland, sons of country gentlemen, clergymen and farmers, who had been educated in the schools and colleges of Scotland.

"My son recommended a boy, the son of our forester in Scotland, brought up at our school where he turned out a quick, clever boy; that boy has never seen a town, nor known anything of the vices and habits of towns; he has gone out as an apprentice, and will rise, if his merits justify the council in promoting him, to be one of our chief men."

The boy referred to was Archibald McDonald, who went from Scotland to York Factory in 1854 as an apprentice clerk. Twenty-five years later he became a chief factor and he retired in 1911 as the oldest chief factor then living. Fifty-seven years of

his life had been devoted to the Hudson's Bay Company. Since boyhood he had known nothing else. And he was only one of scores of similar lads from the North of Scotland.

McDonald married Eleen Inkster, a sister of Colin Inkster, "The Sheriff" of Red River fame. She has been described as a "highly estimable and educated woman." They had six children, all of whom, after being tutored at home in an isolated Hudson's Bay post, received degrees at Harvard and McGill universities and at St. John's college. One was an artist, another a nurse. Edward Ellice McDonald became a well known surgeon and author of surgical books in the United States. Two entered the service in the prairies but with the inrush of settlers they retired, one to be a banker. Both were members of provincial parliaments.

Not all men in the Hudson's Bay Company made so great a success of life as Chief Factor McDonald, but his case is by no means exceptional. The Company "caught them young," and it trained them in a fine school. Isaac Cowie, who went out as an apprentice clerk nearly half a century after union, was assigned to McDonald's post on the plains, and he has written how his superior accompanied him on strolls outside the fort "and in many long evening talks" took infinite pains in describing the country and the customs of trade, the rules and policies of the Company and the spirit which animated the service.

It was the priest and novitiate. The Hudson's Bay service was a religion with those men who had come out as raw Highland boys, and thus they passed on its precepts. They told countless stories of their own experiences and those of men renowned in the fur trade, not stories of a wild, free life in the wilderness, of narrow escape and Indian massacre and exciting hunting episodes, but of integrity and loyalty and devotion to an ideal. They told of the responsibility of a lone white man shepherding a flock of childlike Indians, guiding their buying and their domestic arrangements, encouraging the disheartened, aiding the destitute.

It was a religion to those men, the Hudson's Bay Company. From adolescence they had known nothing else. Its regulations were sacred. Once a chief factor complained to Governor Simpson of a chief trader who had killed a Company cow on the "frivolous" excuse of starvation. Cowie wrote that when buffalo

became scarce in 1871, the only food for voyageurs was the suckers caught in the river. Men arrived from an outpost who had lived on poisoned wolves and gophers and now, as they faced a long journey, asked why McDonald did not kill a steer, only to be told with stern Scotch indignation that a Company regulation forbade it. At another post Cowie suggested to the officer in charge that he kill a draft animal to feed starving voyageurs. "What?" his superior exclaimed in horror. "Kill a Company ox! Never while I am in charge."

To us, in this age, such action seems ridiculous and blindly stubborn. But starvation was no novelty then. It had been common for one hundred years. A cow represented a vast amount of labor and no inconsiderable expense in transportation from some distant agricultural settlement. It could not be replaced. The men would live, and could work, without food for a time. That was part of the fur trade.

It was a stern and rigorous code, but it was a stern and rigorous land. Distances were enormous. All supplies were precious after being transported at an incredible expenditure of human labor. Sitting in your easy chair, with a telephone at your elbow and stores of every kind anxious to serve, your conception of life's necessities is a bit different than that of a man two thousand terrible miles from a source of supply. Each ounce becomes precious under such circumstances. Its disposal is determined, not by blind rule, but by the wisdom of hundreds of veterans whose lessons have been learned through bitter experience.

But if those stern servants of the great Company would not kill an ox to feed starving voyageurs engaged in routine work, they would go to any lengths to rescue those same men, or any Indian or even stranger, under other circumstances. It was one of the beautiful features of the Hudson's Bay spirit, that sense of responsibility for every person within the enormous area it ruled. It was a part of feudalism, and of the vast sympathy of which only those who have suffered are capable. It was a part, too, of that great pride in the power of the Company, and in its duty as supreme ruler. Each manager of a post was responsible for his district, responsible not only for the disposal of goods

and the collection of fur but for the safety and welfare of every individual therein.

Two striking instances of this have been recorded. The first came in 1828 when Jedediah Smith, one of the most famous and energetic of American traders, was attacked by Indians in the southwest part of Oregon. Of a large trapping party, only Smith and three others escaped to make their way to Fort Vancouver on the Columbia. Dr. John McLoughlin, old Nor'Wester and now commander of a vast territory for the Hudson's Bay Company, immediately sent out a punitive expedition which recovered the fur. Smith remained through the winter as McLoughlin's guest and, while it has been pointed out that McLoughlin purchased the fur at an advantage to his Company, his record in Oregon history does not bear out any contention that this was his sole object.

The second instance also occurred on the Columbia and the chief actor was another famous Nor'Wester, one credited with leading in reckless aggressiveness before union, Peter Skene Ogden. The middle name of this man who had received a legal education is sometimes spelled "Skien" in signatures on his letters, but he explained this by saying that he liked a bit of variety at times.

In December, 1847, word came to Fort Vancouver, where Chief Factor Ogden was in charge, of the Whitman massacre. Whitman, an American physician, and several companions were murdered by Indians far up the Columbia. By treaty, that country had just become American territory, but no American forces were available, and the Indians were holding a number of Americans, men, women and children, prisoner. At any moment, more might be slain.

The Hudson's Bay spirit and tradition rose above international complications. Ogden was still in command of that district as a trader, and he started at once. It was a dangerous mission. The Indians were aroused because they believed Dr. Whitman had introduced measles among them. Ogden met the hostile band and, although he had a much inferior force, demanded the release of the prisoners. This was granted after a long parley. Ogden wrote that he did not sleep for two days and nights while



the negotiations were in progress. The Indian chief said he would not have granted the request to any other white men. The Americans were taken in safety to Fort Vancouver.

Ogden, who left his name in Utah's capital, died in Oregon in 1854 while still in charge of that district for the Company. Archibald McKinlay, a co-worker on the Columbia, wrote of him in 1882: "Whenever the Hudson's Bay Company had occasion to send any of their officers on a dangerous expedition, Peter S. Ogden was sure of the berth. His even temper, his great flow of good humor and his wonderful patience, tact and perseverance, his utter disregard of personal inconvenience and suffering rendered him just the man for any difficult and dangerous task. He was greatly esteemed by his brother officers and nearly worshiped by his men and the Indians."

Ogden, McLoughlin, and Sir James Douglas formed the great triumvirate of Hudson's Bay men on the Pacific coast, and all had been Nor'Westers. Samuel Black did not attain their distinction, but when he was murdered by an Indian the Company's officers from all that district flocked in to avenge his death. Black probably attained the most unenviable reputation of all North West men in the last days of the struggle but on union his fellows gave him a ring bearing this inscription: "to the most worthy of the worthy Nor'Westers."

The actions of Ogden and McLoughlin, while noteworthy, attained prominence because of an international aspect. But from the Yukon to Labrador the same policy prevailed. The Hudson's Bay was the sole ruler, and a great pride in that domination was developed. This was not a blind arrogance by any means, though as such it has often been represented. It was more a feeling of responsibility, of obligation to a tradition. Joseph Conrad once wrote that a spirit of service rather than a spirit of adventure has animated the Britisher in his activities across the world, and nowhere has this been better illustrated than in the actions of Hudson's Bay men when the Company was at the height of its power and glory. The Hudson's Bay Company was there to get fur. Its servants were governed by that purpose. But coincident with that purpose was an amazing spirit of service, of accountability and of duty.

To those lonely men in far places, the Company was supreme. Its power was limitless. Its actions were just. Its course was right, always. But from that conception the usually attendant evil of tyranny did not sprout. Monopoly was not construed as an opportunity to oppress but an obligation to be fulfilled. Critics have contended otherwise in savage attacks upon the Hudson's Bay. Democracy, abhorring exclusive privilege, finally declared all Canada "free" and the Company a trading concern with no more rights than any other. Yet democracy has never governed the wilderness with the fairness and justice that autocracy provided. The Indian has never been so moral or so contented. Fur bearing animals have never since been on the increase. Except for the use of liquor and scenes of violence, all the evils that inevitably characterized competition in the fur trade have returned to the north.

The system of selecting apprentice clerks was given much thought in London but it received far more careful attention in Canada. The training was long. The contract called for five years with a payment of twenty pounds the first year, twenty-five the second, thirty the third and then two raises of ten pounds each. If the apprentice had displayed the necessary qualities, he was reëngaged for three years at seventy-five pounds a year and at the end of eight years in the service received one hundred pounds. He was then capable of taking charge of a post or to be accountant. A chief tradership was open to him, and was won on merit, as was the ultimate goal, a chief factorship.

In his first year, an apprentice clerk was usually kept at a headquarters depot and later sent out to act as clerk in a trading post. Sometimes these boys showed such adaptability and promise that they were placed in charge of small posts after two or three years in the service, but as a rule they were kept under instruction and observation.

The system was a more formal development of that employed by the North West Company, and it retained that great advantage of the old Montreal organization, possibility of ultimate advancement to ownership in the Company. Also, it permitted a weeding out of the unfit, and therein lay the great success of the apprentice method of selection. For a century after the union

of the rival organizations, the dismissal of an officer was extremely rare. If a man survived the years of training, he was usually of high caliber. He had been well tested in various situations. Many chief factors and chief traders had watched and guided his development, and a great pride in the Company demanded that only the best men be advanced. Once a clerk had received such recognition, he became a member of that brotherhood of service.

Being subject to the common weaknesses of human nature, the system was not infallible. Also, the life of a fur trader was exacting in its loneliness and in the power it entailed. As a result, men not quite up to the standard occasionally slipped through, or weakness developed later. It was upon actions of these few that much criticism of the Company was based, and sometimes it was from this class that the disgruntled employee came with grievances aired in writing.

A peculiar and somewhat rare combination of qualities is found in the successful fur trader. So far as the actual business of conducting a post is concerned, he must understand the Indian character thoroughly. An absolute essential is that he keep the hunters constantly under control, maintain their respect for him and for the Company, and yet not rule them so harshly they become dissatisfied or mutinous. This necessitates executive ability and leadership of a peculiar kind, and it is not something that every one can acquire. Further, it is necessary that a post manager have a good business mind, understand fur and its value and be able to adapt himself to changing conditions.

But most of all the fur trader's life was a test of character. Power is a subtle intoxicant, and in the Hudson's Bay Company it was almost unlimited. Once each year the man in charge of a post went out to headquarters, met his fellows, received orders from his superiors and then went back to another year of solitude. Perhaps he had an apprentice clerk. In later years, when Indians and half-breeds composed the laboring class, no other white man was seen for a year. The manager was surrounded by people of inferior character and intelligence. He ruled them absolutely. His word on any subject was law. The welfare of each

hunter, and of each member of that hunter's family, rested with the man in charge of a post.

Loneliness, unlimited power, opportunity to vent petty spites, inactivity, dreariness, lack of the little props that keep us straight in civilized communities, all these constantly assaulted the character of the young man who ruled over a district often larger than some European kingdoms. That men survived such an ordeal, that they maintained their integrity, that they grew stronger and lived lives of great usefulness, is one of the most remarkable achievements of the Hudson's Bay Company. Nothing explains more clearly what we mean in saying that the spiritual development in the service is its crowning glory.

At this point a study of the frontispiece would be of value. The photograph was taken in Winnipeg in 1887 in the last meeting of commissioned officers under the post-union régime. Nearly every man in the picture came to Canada as a boy, or was born in fur land, entering the service in his youth and never knowing anything else. A lifetime of loneliness in distant posts lies behind each. Old Robert Campbell, whose bearded face shows just to the right of the door in the back row, knew many winters of starvation on the headquarters of the Yukon a half century earlier. All had experienced privation, danger and the harsh exactions of wilderness life. But most of all they had survived the devastating effects of isolation and power. Their characters had dominated the insidious forces of idleness and the constant hammering of temptation. Victory shows in the faces of those fine old men. No word picture can portray the splendor of the Hudson's Bay Company as does this photograph.

## CHAPTER XXXV

The physical perfection of the Hudson's Bay machine grew steadily for many years after union. Exploration came, and new posts were established, until every fur bearing corner of the Company's vast territory had been made to pay tribute.

To reach so many distant places, to insure the transportation of supplies, an elaborate system was developed. While it did not have the long hauls of the marvelous canoe transport of the North West Company because of the central location of York Factory, it did refine and elaborate and make certain of delivery.

One of the first departures was away from the birch bark canoe. The old Hudson's Bay Company had used a clumsy scow or boat on the North and South Saskatchewan Rivers and in Manitoba and now this craft was perfected and the York boat came into use. The last one was built at Norway House in 1924, just a century after the type was evolved.

The York boat carried from three and one half to six tons, whether used for rivers or on lakes with few and easy portages. Going downstream, it was able to run most rapids, especially if lightened. Going up, it was taken across portages on rollers. Made of sawed lumber, it did not last long, and a new keel was needed every season. Where the going was rough, a craft survived three years, on other routes longer. The crew generally consisted of nine men. Oars instead of paddles were used, and a huge square sail that served as a tent at night.

York boats were employed on all main lines of transportation and wherever rivers or lakes permitted, but the canoe has held its place in smaller waterways until the present. It is no longer a birch bark affair, however, but a factory product, and it is more often towed by a shallow-draft motor boat than paddled.

Before 1821 each post took out its own brigade and brought back its own fur. This practice was soon done away with. The Red River brigade, for instance, could make two trips to York

Factory in a year. It was impossible for a post far down the Mackenzie to make the long voyage with certainty, so the Red River brigade took the Mackenzie freight as far as Methye Portage, then returned for its own.

Thus Norway House, just north of Lake Winnipeg, became the great distributing depot. Brigades of York boats left it in every direction. The marvelous feature was a rigid adherence to schedule. The chief officer at Norway House became the train dispatcher of a wide-spread and intricate system. Goods were brought from York Factory, on the sea, assembled, sorted and sent out, and they left on time. It was necessary, for instance, that boats leaving Norway House connect with a brigade leaving the mouth of the Mackenzie. And no telegraph existed, no means of communication except those same boats and the winter express. Yet an experienced officer knew within a day or two where each brigade was on any given date.

The whole system of transport in fur land is vastly interesting, and would fill a volume. It was subject to constant changes. When the railroad reached St. Paul, Minnesota, in the sixties, steamboats and Red River carts were used to connect with Fort Garry, and again the center of the transportation system shifted. A decade later the first Canadian railroad reached Winnipeg, and again a radical change was made. Scows had been used on the Athabasca, and when the railroad came to Edmonton the Churchill River-Methye Portage route was killed. In 1882 a steamship was built at Fort Chipewyan, and later another above the rapids on the upper Athabasca.

The long rapids at Fort Smith on Great Slave River, where a canoe load of North West men was drowned in the first exploration of the river in 1786, were circumvented for many years by Red River carts drawn by oxen. Now tractors haul goods around the rapids and automobiles jolt along the eighteen-mile trail. In 1918 three hundred tons was the annual quantity of freight taken across this portage. In 1929 approximately 4,000 tons were transported, although this was not all for the fur trade. A tramway with wooden rails was built on the Grand Rapids portage of the upper Athabasca but in this century the railroad reached Fort McMurray at the mouth of the Clearwater and eliminated it.

In the Saskatchewan and Alberta country summer transport ceased in modern times and goods are freighted by horse drawn sleighs in winter. Only in the Lake Superior and Lake Huron districts does the canoe still play an important part, but it has only a short distance to go from the nearest railroad.

And in the far north the airplane carries the mail all the way down the Mackenzie and even brings fur from some distant posts!

With union, the French Canadian voyageur ceased to be indispensable. He had been necessary to the North West Company in the long transport from Montreal and his employment was for the year around, for trade rivalry demanded "trippers" to visit hunters during the winter and to build the many forts the Nor'Westers were constantly erecting. With the new Hudson's Bay Company in sole possession of the field, the voyageur was required only in summer, and thus he became too expensive.

His place was taken at first by the half-breeds of Red River in the plains transport but soon it was discovered that the Cree and Ojibwa was a good boatman and that, by employing him during the summer, he not only would be prevented from hunting fur out of season but would also be able to add to his income. John McLean, who wrote of twenty-five years in the service, said that by 1833 these woods Indians had succeeded Canadians between Norway House and York Factory and that "none did it more expeditiously or rendered their cargoes in better condition." The French Canadian had always been careless of goods and fur.

The use of Indians spread gradually throughout the entire forested belt. The Canadian was still used in some places, and he contributed to the large trapping parties and to transportation on the Columbia. He lasted longer in the overland transport on the Canadian prairies, giving way in the end to the railroad. The last of him was seen in scow transportation on the upper Athabasca in comparatively recent years. The railroad ended that.

The Cree and Ojibwa became as colorful as the voyageur and not the least remarkable feature of their work was submission to discipline. Without a trace of tribal government in their experience and no knowledge of coöperative effort, they still managed to work with surprising efficiency once they had started. The Indian is always thought of as a stolid, repressed individual,

whereas the woods Cree and the Ojibwa were volatile, easily excited and entranced by a bit of rough humor. These qualities were particularly noticeable when a brigade departed. A wise post manager set the date a day or two in advance if he wished to get started at the time decided upon. The whole band was gathered at the post. The boatmen were paid in advance, which meant a wild scramble in the sales shop while goods were selected.

The crews were chosen as sand-lot boys choose sides in a ball game, the steersman of each draft being given a choice in rotation. The whole band became wildly excited over this and those left to the last were the objects of much laughter and shrieking comments. Even then, when the last detail was arranged, a boatman would dash off on some forgotten errand, innumerable excuses for delay would be made, and it was noon before the furladen boats finally departed.

Nor did they depart alone. The entire band, perhaps several hundred men, women and children, accompanied them in canoes to the first night's encampment.

But once they were under way, a new spirit animated the Indians. A good post manager would have instigated a bit of bad feeling between the crews, and this was vented in constant effort to be first across a lake and across a portage. Enormous loads were carried, often at a run. The boats were rushed over portages, being dragged or slid on rollers. Much singing and yelling was done. The excitability of the Indian became particularly noticeable when a boat was in danger. Each man assumed command and shouted directions. Many a York boat passed through a rapids only because of sheer chance and its own buoyancy.

The old Nor'Westers took chances in canoe transportation, and loss of cargo and crew was not infrequent. But it was necessary in those days of long routes. Speed was essential in the short summer season of the north. The risk of running a rapids was always taken if it meant a saving of time and labor, and the voyageur always preferred the hazard of swift water to the toil of a portage. But after union this practice became unpopular. Speed was not so necessary as routes were shortened, and the Company was demanding extreme economy as well as efficiency. Resolutions were adopted by the council forbidding the running of dangerous rapids



and in 1840 it was ordered that officers remain with the brigades to see that the rule was enforced.

The "light canoe" of the old Nor'Westers was still retained for speedy journeys by officials. Governor Simpson became noted for the rapidity with which he traveled and many stories are told of his driving methods and the long hours required of his canoe-men. But Simpson was only following the North West Company practice, although perhaps he perfected it. At least he made some remarkable journeys, as, for instance, that in 1828 when he went from York Factory to Fort Langley at the mouth of the Fraser River, a distance of 3,181 miles, in sixty-five days of canoe travel.

Governor Simpson did much of his work in a canoe, dictating letters to a secretary who sat beside him. Once his craft was swamped in a rapids and his correspondence soaked. Often his canoe-men, and he used a crew of favorite Iroquois for many years, paddled twenty hours a day. After the early morning start, Sir George would go to sleep again beneath a tarpaulin. But he wakened if the pace slackened and he would slip a hand over a gunwale, keeping it hidden by the tarpaulin, and determine the speed by the height the water splashed up his wrist.

The pride of the Hudson's Bay service was the winter express. This was employed by both companies before Union but had been developed further by the Nor'Westers, whose lines of communication were much longer. They also operated a "light canoe" summer express that the partners at Fort William might have the latest reports, and in this the first scheduled operation was perfected. Alexander Ross wrote: "The one from the Columbia sets out with the regularity and rapidity of a steamboat, it reaches Fort William, on Lake Superior, the first of July; remaining there until the twentieth of that month, when it takes its departure back, and, with an equal degree of precision, arrives at Fort George, at the mouth of the Columbia River, on the twentieth of October."

That same practice of precision was adopted by the Hudson's Bay in its winter express, which the Nor'Westers had also developed to remarkable efficiency. The Fort Yukon packet was the Hudson's Bay Company's pride, and in its entire operation through more than half a century not a mail bag was lost beyond

recovery. Men who carried the precious load were drowned in rapids, shot, smothered in a snowslide and once eaten by wild animals, but somehow the packet always reached its destination. The Yukon express was forwarded by canoe in summer and by dog team in winter the enormous distance of 4,500 miles.

Chief Factor Thompson has left a good description of this long route of communication. The average speed, he wrote, based on averages over ten years, was twenty-seven and a half miles a day on the Mackenzie River on snowshoes. This includes stoppages. The distance from Edmonton to Fort McPherson was 2,012 miles. Half-breeds carried the winter mail, which was sent from every post, and the task was one of honor and of great pride. Rules forbade the men to carry firearms. No wild animals would attack them, they were provided with food, and they might waste their time in chasing a caribou or moose that crossed the trail.

The winter express is still employed, although the dog team was abandoned in most places long ago and a lone Indian, dragging a toboggan, carries the mail. The dog team never became so important to the fur trade as fiction and popular conception would have us believe. Food for the animals restricted the radius of operation. The Company itself never became interested in the breeding of sleigh dogs. Individual officers did, and some developed famous teams. In the days of monopoly, when it was not necessary to visit hunters' camps in winter, the dog team was used almost entirely for the winter express. When competition was resumed, the "tripper," a man who made a round of the Indians' winter camps, again came into use and each post maintained three to six or more teams of dogs. These were fed on whitefish, caught and dried in the fall. The average Hudson's Bay post in the forested area put up 30,000 fish for dogs each year, the average outpost 10,000.

But the Indian, dragging a toboggan which carried the mail, his rabbit skin sleeping robe and food, was more economical and efficient. The Fort Hope Indians on the Albany River became the most famous of all winter transport men and were able to haul 350 pounds on a toboggan.

On the long Mackenzie River route the dog hung on until the coming of the airplane. The north, of course, welcomed the new

and swift means of communication. Mail would come every week or two instead of twice a year. But the airplane was not certain. Weather interfered with its operation, and the north found itself wishing for a return of the slower but more certain dog team. When it operated, they knew within an hour or two when the winter mail would arrive.

Coincident with the development of the physical machinery of the Hudson's Bay Company came the perfection of its relationship with the Indian. The reasons back of it may be ascribed to self-interest, but that does not tell all the story. Self-interest probably was the basic reason, a building for the future, but with it there grew an astounding sense of trusteeship and an amazing integrity. This is exemplified in the entire policy of the Company during the years of monopoly.

The critic of the fur trade, the sentimentalist, and at times the anthropologist, has never understood the Indian. The Hudson's Bay man understood him perfectly, and upon that understanding his rulership was based. He knew the Indian was honest regarding things in his own world but without an ethical viewpoint on matters outside his experience. The trader knew the Indian had no tomorrow, that his temperament was mercurial, that he was easily discouraged, was subject to many superstitions, to misunderstanding of motives in others. He knew, in short, that the Indian was essentially a child and must be controlled as a child.

It was upon such knowledge that the Hudson's Bay policy of control was based. The Indian's improvidence demanded supervision in most details of his life and compelled the system of giving credit, or "debt." White man's manufacturers quickly eliminated the bow and arrow and skin clothing. Long before union in 1821 the Indian had become dependent on the gun, woolen cloth, iron kettle, knife and many smaller articles. When fall came and the year's hunt was to begin, it became necessary to provide the hunter with all such essentials. If he did not have them he and his family might starve, and if they escaped starvation they would have been so busy getting food and clothing by primitive means they would have had no time to kill fur bearing animals.

Thus, in the fall, each hunter was given an outfit of necessities to carry him through the winter. In the spring he returned to the

post, turned in his fur, settled his accounts, and if anything were left over he immediately indulged in a wild orgy of spending until the last little wooden tally stick, or goose quill or lead token was gone.

That sounds very simple but the Indian's nature subjected the entire arrangement to endless variations. Personal feuds, domestic troubles or vagaries of superstition might cause a hunter to sit in his wigwam or teepee all winter and gather no fur. The successful post manager was alert to any evidence of these factors and straightened them out. Many a young Scotch boy has sat as a court of domestic relations and smoothed over marital difficulties. Further, the Indian was inclined to consider "debt" an arrangement between himself and the post manager, not an arrangement with the Company, and the Indian's code permitted nullification of that arrangement on the mere grounds of personal slight.

Out of this grew not only a paternal attitude on the part of the successful fur trader but the necessity of absolute integrity. To an Indian a promise is a promise, and a Hudson's Bay man never made one unless he knew he could fulfill it. And, once made, that promise became sacred. Succeeding generations of Indians discovered this rule to be infallible.

In the matter of goods furnished to the Indians, the standards of the Hudson's Bay Company were the highest possible. The Hudson's Bay blanket became famous but it was only one of many articles which were the finest that could be manufactured. The Hudson's Bay capot, a hooded coat reaching almost to the knees, and strouds, a woolen cloth that wore like iron, were exceptional products. Until modern times, when competition finally reached every corner of fur land, the old muzzle loading trade gun was the only weapon available to the Indian. Its advantages were several. It was cheap and had no mechanism too intricate for the Indian mind. It could shoot either ball or shot, and it was the Indian's practice to carry his gun with only a powder charge and load with whichever projectile was required. This meant, too, cheap ammunition for the user and a great saving in freight carried enormous distances.

The Hudson's Bay Company never permitted an Indian to starve to death or even to be in want, no matter if he were too

old to support himself. Half-breed employees at the posts whose whole lifetime was devoted to the service were pensioned. Conservation of game was always encouraged and in many parts of the forest area this developed into a system of hunting territories handed down from father to son. The boundaries were clearly understood and each Indian kept a fairly accurate census of his fur bearers and thus did not extinguish them.

In bad fur years, as when the fox and the lynx vanished after those strange disappearances of the snowshoe hare, goods that were not necessities were taken from the shelves in trade shops that the Indian might not be disappointed in being denied supplies for which he would not be able to pay and which he did not absolutely need. Prices paid for furs were changed to suit various situations and avoid misunderstandings on the hunter's part. For instance, if an Indian had a fancied grievance, he would be presented with an article he wanted and the cost of it would be subtracted from his account by paying less for certain furs. Or he would be paid less for furs which the Company desired to conserve, and the difference would be added to the price of other pelts. Or a large "debt" due to illness or misfortune would be gradually reduced without the Indian's knowledge by shading prices paid for his fur.

The sentimentalist might find such practices reprehensible but the skillful fur trader knew that by no other method could he attain his object. A million words could not have explained anything to the Indian who believed he had been injured. He would have gone out and sulked through the winter. The gift made him happy and successful. The Indian with a large "debt" would have been so discouraged he would have ceased hunting, and both he and his family would have suffered.

These are only a few glimpses of the system of Hudson's Bay rule, and they apply only to the forested area. Governor Simpson, testifying in 1857, said the Company never had gained control over the plains Indians, who lived in large bands and were subject to the influence of American traders. The same applies to the Columbia and much of the Pacific coast. But in Rupert's land, and in the Mackenzie basin, where competition was unknown, the paternalistic rule of the Hudson's Bay was absolute.

## CHAPTER XXXVI

The North West Company had left few corners of the continent for the new Hudson's Bay Company to discover. Only the great distance from Montreal prevented the Highland traders from pressing farther into the unknown. Their operations in Oregon and Washington and what is now British Columbia were remarkable achievements in view of the fact that the base of supplies was almost as far east as the Atlantic tidewater. They had attempted to follow Sir Alexander Mackenzie to the mouth of the river which bears his name, and even to reach the Yukon, but short seasons and the thousands of intervening miles prevented.

After union this extension of trade could be made. As soon as transportation was elaborated and the shipment of supplies made certain, it was possible to push on. The movement began in 1831, when the first effort to open the huge territory between Hudson Bay and the Atlantic Ocean was made. The North West Company had leased the old French district, the "King's Posts" north of the St. Lawrence, a quarter of a century earlier and had penetrated to the Bay on the route of the early French through Lake Misstassini. But the vast territory between the height of land and Hudson Strait was unexplored and undeveloped.

It is a terrible country, that back of Labrador, and the Hudson's Bay expedition going overland from Moose Factory to Ungava Bay suffered greatly. Fort Chimo was built and then, in 1837, John McLean was sent to press the trade inland and connect with Esquimaux Bay, just north of the Straits of Belle Isle. As in all such Hudson's Bay expeditions, a post or an exploring party was expected to support itself on the country, and McLean suffered great hardships and several defeats before he finally crossed Labrador from north to south. Later a post on Whale River was built, and these establishments still continue in the Company's service.

Extension of trade south from the Columbia has been described,

and also the lease from Russia of the Pacific coast to the sixtieth parallel. Sir George Simpson was responsible for an aggressive attitude on all fronts, and his scheme is said to have comprehended even the purchase of California from Mexico. The governor took a great interest in each detail of exploration and wrote many encouraging and commendatory letters to men engaged in the work.

He was particularly anxious to extend the trade northward and to the northwest and in 1834 John M. McLeod pushed up the terrible Liard River from Fort Simpson and discovered Dease River and Dease Lake. A second expedition failed and then young Robert Campbell volunteered to establish a post on Dease Lake. He did so, and crossed the divide to the headwaters of the Stikine, where he met coast Indians trading for the Russians. In the next few years he went on northward, suffering incredible hardships, and was the first to see the upper Yukon. He established a post, Fort Selkirk, at the junction of the Pelly and Lewes Rivers in 1848 and was two years without supplies or communication with his superiors. In 1851 he went down the Yukon, found many bands of Indians who had never seen white men, and reached Fort Yukon of the Hudson's Bay Company at the mouth of Porcupine River.

The lower Yukon meanwhile had been discovered from the eastward. John Bell went down the Mackenzie and built Fort McPherson on Peel River, which flows into the Mackenzie delta, and in 1846 he crossed over and found the great Alaskan stream. The next year La Pierre's House was established on the route to the Yukon and at the same time C. T. Murray built Fort Yukon at the mouth of the Porcupine River. That site was occupied for twenty-two years. Then, after Alaska had been sold to the United States, an American army officer visited it in 1869 and ordered the Company to move back across the international boundary. As this never had been surveyed, the Hudson's Bay man guessed at the location, and in 1890 a survey showed that the post was still twelve miles inside the United States territory. Again it was moved, but later was abandoned because it was unprofitable.

In 1857 Roderick Macfarlane who, as a chief factor, did not retire from the service until the present century, discovered An-

derson River east of the Mackenzie and established Fort Anderson. This, too, was later abandoned.

The Hudson's Bay Company now believed it had extended trade to the limits of its territory, and for half a century or more no new posts of consequence were erected. Then, in the discovery of the so-called "blond Eskimos" by Stefansson, the Company found a fresh field and only fifteen years ago began the erection of new posts, some on Arctic islands north of the continent, for trade with the Esquimos.

Exploration was not confined strictly to the fur trade in those first decades after union. In 1833 the Hudson's Bay Company contributed both men and supplies for Captain George Back's search for Captain John Ross, the expedition resulting in extensive barren ground discoveries. In 1836 the council at Norway House decided to send Chief Factor Peter Warren Dease, old Nor'Wester, and Thomas Simpson, nephew of the governor and a clerk in the service, to explore the Arctic coast and connect discoveries of British explorers, notably those of Beeching, who had reached Point Barrow in northern Alaska in 1826, and of Sir John Franklin to the east. In 1846 Dr. John Rae, a surgeon in the Hudson's Bay service, was sent north to Repulse Bay, and from there he examined 700 miles of coast and connected the work of the Arctic explorers Ross and Parry.

All this effort on the part of the Hudson's Bay Company gave a new impetus to the search for a Northwest Passage and Franklin attempted to find it, and was lost in the greatest of Arctic tragedies. The Hudson's Bay Company took up the search for him, and Sir John Richardson and Dr. Rae examined the coast from the Mackenzie to the Coppermine. Rae continued east in 1849 and 1850 and mapped the shores of Wollaston and Victoria Islands and in 1854 connected the discoveries of Simpson and Ross and showed King William Land to be an island. He was the first to find relics of the Franklin expedition and learn the story of what had happened, for which he received half of the reward of £20,000 that had been offered.

A remarkable feature of these journeys of Hudson's Bay men was the method of conducting them. Strict economy ruled every Company activity, and it was not considered necessary for a man



going on a long and hazardous journey to prepare an elaborate outfit. Simpson wrote Dr. Rae that he would be expected to live off the country, and Rae, taking four months' supplies, was gone almost two years. That economy of conducting any enterprise prevailed through the years. A former officer of the Company is living today who, in 1882, when only eighteen years old, was sent from Fort Churchill to Chesterfield Inlet. He was absent six months, was accompanied only by an Eskimo youth, and the total cost of supplies for the expedition was a trifle more than forty dollars. That youthful servant of fifty years ago still carries an itemized list of his expenditures. At the beginning of each year he copies the list in a fresh book in marvelously neat figures. The Hudson's Bay Company caught its men young and trained them for a lifetime.

Meanwhile, the Hudson's Bay Company prospered. With economy of operation, with extension of trade, with the benefits of monopoly in increased fur production and conservation and a better morale among the Indian hunters, and with the spirit which actuated the service, success was inevitable.

The original stock of the new Company, £400,000, was increased by "melons" to £500,000. In the seventeen years ending with 1856 its profits from the fur trade alone were £65,573, of which £39,343 went to the Company in London and £26,229 to the chief factors and chief traders. The general profits since union, inclusive of the fur trade, amounted in 1857, according to the testimony of Edward Ellice, to twelve per cent on the capital. In that period a chief factor's annual share averaged £617 and a chief trader's £308.

Ellice testified before the Parliamentary Committee only on subjects pertaining to the fur trade. He said the Company had other interests but contended they were not subject to the inquiry. The Hudson's Bay had already begun to expand, although at that time its far reaching activities of the present were not even dreamed of.

The Company's first license to conduct an exclusive trade in all of what is now Canada outside the original Rupert's Land was to expire in 1842. In 1836 it made application for a renewal of this license. Opposition did not develop and in 1838 the British

government granted a new license for twenty-one years from date. This expired in 1859 and was not renewed.

Meanwhile the Company had lost its hold in Oregon and Washington. That entire story is of absorbing interest and, as has been said, it cannot be told briefly. It touches international relations and a vital incident in the history of the United States. In short, the Hudson's Bay Company made a valiant effort to retain all that western district but the British government did not consider it of great value except for the fur trade and at that time did not wish to arouse the United States government, which was in a rather touchy and insolent mood. The forty-ninth parallel was run through to the Pacific and, while the Hudson's Bay Company maintained posts south of the line for some years, it eventually withdrew. Later Alaska was purchased from Russia by the United States and the Company lost its foothold on the coast north of "54-40," the present boundary.

The constriction of the Company's territory which began in 1846 with the loss of Oregon and Washington was inevitable. Politically and in the public prints, both in the United States and in Canada, the Hudson's Bay became an object of abuse. It was a relic of feudalism and of autocracy on a continent gone mad with the idea of democracy. It was a pre-pioneering enterprise and inevitably it had to give way. But it suffered most from attacks that were actuated by social trend and political theory and which were not justified by the true conditions. The charges were typical of democracy's attitude and methods, and all Canada, and part of England, joined in the onslaught. From that period, and from those attacks, much of the misconception of the true position of the Hudson's Bay Company has come.

The attack centered on the Red River colony, the Selkirk failure which the Company had inherited and which it bought back from the Selkirk heirs for £84,000, although Selkirk himself had paid nothing for it. Edward Ellice, testifying before the Parliamentary Committee in 1857, called the nobleman's settlement an "unwise speculation," and said "it has failed."

But the colony and the Company's government thereof served as a foothold for the attacks. The basic reason was that Canada wished to become a dominion, not a colony, that the germs of



Ancient and modern. Indians in ancient attire on site of Hudson's Bay Fort at Edmonton, with Macdonald Hotel in background.



The Bastion or the "Stone Fort" near Winnipeg.



nationhood were sprouting, that at last the time was on hand when the vast fertile prairies were needed in world expansion.

The budding Canadian nation was not content only to see the Company's exclusive license to trade in the Indian territories brought to an end by the investigation of 1857. It kept up the attack, carrying its case to London, and in 1869 democracy triumphed. The Hudson's Bay Company agreed to the extinction of its charter upon payment of £300,000 by Canada.

That struggle, and the details connected with it and its outcome, belongs more to the history of Canada than of the Hudson's Bay Company. The inevitable had come. The fur trade had retreated, as it always must until the last beaver skin and the last fox skin is taken. Democracy was in the saddle, demanding its rights, asserting its power.

There is no need to argue the question. The result was destined. Civilization has a method of expansion which ignores the rights of inferior peoples. In the United States the Indian and the buffalo had to go. If we shed tears for either, they are futile tears. No one would exchange the fertile and happy great west for the desolate land in which strong Indian tribes were free to oppress the weaker and give vent to excess energy through warfare on one another. In Canada, with its great forested area, conditions were slightly different, but the rich prairies of Alberta and Saskatchewan and Manitoba are infinitely more productive of happiness than in days when savage tribes brought vast human misery by their sheer love of battle.

And yet, because of the inherent and peculiar nature of the fur trade, democracy has failed where autocracy and monopoly were a conspicuous success. It has given the evils of competition to a land which once knew peace and contentment under feudal rule. The Indian has never been so happy, fur bearing animals so numerous, contentment so widespread. Democracy, with its passion for legislation, has sought to regulate, and it has never approached the signal success attained by the Hudson's Bay Company.

Democracy has enacted countless restrictive laws without preventing a thinning out of native animals. It has been forced to bar white trappers from certain districts to save a livelihood for

the Indian, and, despite that it is faced with the possibility of many Indians' becoming public charges. In recent years three bands of natives have burned large areas in an effort to drive out white trappers and save the land for themselves.

New means of transportation have made it possible for traders to penetrate to every quarter of the north, and high prices for furs have resulted in more active competition and a more intensive destruction of animals. In recent years the situation was not unlike that in the early days of the North West Company. Merchants provided independent traders with supplies of goods and the traders scattered through the north. They offered high prices and advanced liberal credit. Indians accepted the credit, and then sold their fur where they could get the most money. With the world depression many of the smaller traders failed and the merchants lost, just as Montreal merchants did in the days following the fall of France.

The whole history of the fur trade in America points to the conclusion that only through monopoly can it be conducted with efficiency and justice. In the western United States, so unrestrained was the competition, so lawless the measures adopted, so freely was liquor used, two decades saw the beginning and the end, saw fur bearing animals exterminated and nearly every Indian tribe rendered hostile. The Hudson's Bay-North West struggle was one of demoralization, waste and death.

In the life of the fur trade on this continent the Hudson's Bay Company furnishes us with the only example of peace and justice and efficiency. Had it been permitted to retain its monopoly, and had that monopoly been conducted without change in policy or attitude, the Canadian Indian would be in a vastly better situation and restrictive legislation to save fur bearing animals would not have been necessary, nor easily evaded as it is now. No matter what the charges brought against the company, and they have not been proved, conditions could never have been so bad as with competition.

In the interests of conservation of fur bearing animals and of the welfare of the Canadian Indian, the Hudson's Bay monopoly should never have been taken from it. But that monopoly was not compatible with political theory or economic views and it had to

go. Nothing is so ruthless as democracy. Revolution is a matter of emotion and not of reason. The young Canadian nation could not live side by side with special privilege. Its growing people wanted the fertile prairies, and for good measure took everything to the Arctic Sea, and then admitted its error by virtually leaving the government of that vast area to the Hudson's Bay Company, and to that splendid spirit which characterized its personnel. One of the most remarkable facts in the whole history of the Company is that so strong had that spirit become, so mighty was the prestige of the organization, it continued to function, almost as of old, long after its status had become that of any ordinary trading concern.

## CHAPTER XXXVII

We have no greater proof of the depth and the solidity of the remarkable spirit of loyalty and devotion on the part of the men who conducted the fur trade for the Hudson's Bay Company than in the manner in which that spirit withstood assaults directed against it. And these assaults came, not from outside the organization, but from within.

In 1857 Edward Ellice testified that more than one-half of the stock was held by men who had no connection with the Company at the time of union thirty-six years earlier. Some London officials continued in command for many years but stockholders shifted. Shares were an investment, and mere ownership could not instill the spirit that animated the service in Canada. Chief factors died or retired, of course, yet young Scotch and English boys were being trained and the feeling of loyalty and devotion grew with each succeeding year of successful accomplishment.

But in England the shareholders sold out, lock, stock and barrel. Charter, shares, everything, were taken over in 1863 by the International Financial Association on payment of £1,500,000. Negotiations lasted nearly a year and a half but the chief factors and the chief traders, the men who conducted the fur trade and who had built up the marvelous spirit and efficiency of the Company, knew nothing of the project until they saw an announcement in newspapers. Yet these men were legally entitled to forty per cent of the profits of the Hudson's Bay Company. They had devoted their lives to making that Company a success. Indignation was intense.

The new owners wished to abolish the deed polls of 1821 and 1834 and place the commissioned officers on a salary, but were afraid of the consequences, afraid that the chief factors and chief traders would form a new company. Capital would have been easily obtained, and the old North West-Hudson's Bay conflict would have been resumed.



The new owners entered into negotiations with the men in the field, but these were conducted very slowly. Not until the charter was surrendered did they reach an agreement, and by that agreement the rights of the chief factors and chief traders were purchased by payment to them of £107,055 of the £300,000 received from Canada. The system of sharing profits was continued, but on a lower scale. One officer estimated that the loss to a chief factor was £188 a year and to a chief trader £41. Moreover, the number of commissioned officers was reduced, thus cutting down still further the amount shared by the men in the field and restricting the possibilities of advancement of younger men.

The sale of their vested rights in 1870 left the commissioned officers without ownership and in 1887 the Company took a further step. It announced that no clerk or employee who had entered the service since 1870 would be advanced to chief factorship or chief tradership. This meant that no longer could apprentices look forward to becoming officers and sharing in the profits of the Company.

The "wintering partner" thus became an institution of the past. The system adopted a little more than a century before by the first Nor'Westers, the system which had brought to the fur trade its swift expansion, its first efficiency and its real glory, was abolished, and it has never been brought back. The practice adopted when Charles II signed the charter, of operation through paid servants, was resumed.

Severe though the blow was, that spirit which was a heritage from the North West Company, and which was developed and strengthened and refined in the first half century of the united Company's history, survived the shock. It had rooted too deeply. It must have become a matter of allegiance to an ideal rather than to a business organization. The product of many years of toil and denial and devotion could not be wiped out by the action of men in London. It had become something wholly apart from London, where the stock was placed on the market and disposed of to a public that saw in it only a good investment.

Coincident with action in London, the Hudson's Bay Company was subjected to attacks from without. As a result of the Parliamentary investigation in 1857, a renewal of the exclusive license

to trade in the Indian Territories was denied, although the Committee expressed satisfaction with, and even praise for, the manner in which the Company had conducted the fur trade and had governed the Indians. But the fertile prairies were needed for national expansion, the swift spread of settlement in the States carried a lesson, and the growing British population in Manitoba was becoming restive. Thus the legal monopoly in practically all of what is now Canada was in effect for only thirty-eight years, although in that period the Company, of course, was subject to competition along the international boundary from Lake Superior to the Rocky Mountains and throughout Oregon and Washington.

With the extinction of exclusive license, an effort was made immediately to share in the rich trade. The great Mackenzie valley was now free to any one, as was the whole British Pacific coast, and it is interesting to note that the first attempt to enter this territory came, not from the east, as had all previous fur trade movements, but from the west. Traders reversed the old North West Company push up the Peace and the Athabasca and entered the Mackenzie by carrying their goods from the Pacific.

They did not get far. The splendid Hudson's Bay solidarity was unimpaired. The Indians were loyal. The free traders lasted only a year or two.

Then, in 1870, two centuries after Charles II had signed the charter, that document became a thing of the past. Now democracy had made all Canada free to the fur trader. The Hudson's Bay Company, legally, was no different than any other commercial organization. But it was vastly different otherwise. Prestige, an intimate knowledge of conditions, a record of fairness and justice, a powerful, smoothly working machine, and its marvelous spirit, these presented a barrier to traffic with the Indians which independent traders could not break down.

Those men who had left Scotland as boys, who had known nothing in life except the Hudson's Bay Company, who had devoted themselves to sustaining its prestige and power, crushed all early attempts to gain a foothold in what had once been sacred territory. The very integrity of that spirit brought charges against the Company, produced an impression in the public mind of a vast, soulless corporation throttling a free land.

Yet no great corporation has ever been actuated by so fine a spirit among its employees. They knew what they had built, those fine old men who had spent half a century in intimate contact with the Indians. They knew their policy was just, that their treatment of the natives was wise and paternal, and they knew only chaos could result from free trade. Like the Nor'Westers whose spiritual descendants they were, they believed they had earned the right to govern the fur trade. The Nor'Westers had discovered and developed the whole Mackenzie basin and their bitterest resentment was aroused when the old Hudson's Bay Company attempted to win a place in it. The attitude of the Hudson's Bay in 1870 was the same.

Those fine old men were justified in their conviction. No matter what the charges rampant democracy has made, their stewardship remains as the world's finest example of the white man's contact with an inferior race. The unlimited opportunity to oppress was theirs, and they did not accept it. It would have been easily possible to wring far greater dividends from the fur trade, and they did not do so. For more than half a century the native peoples of nearly all Canada were at the mercy of a powerful monopoly, and never before or since have they known such peace and contentment.

This is not a bit of extravagant enthusiasm. The testimony is overwhelming, the record is clear. Explorers, scientists, travelers, missionaries and others agree on the justice of Hudson's Bay rule in that period. As an example, there is the testimony of Lieut. Col. J. H. Lefroy, who spent two years in fur land for the Royal Society, as given before the Parliamentary Committee in 1857: "Traders, almost without exception, as far as my observation went, treated the Indians with signal kindness and humanity. I never mingled with a body of men whose general qualities seemed to me more entitled to respect."

It was such a Company that emerged from the days of exclusive privilege to face the competition that was certain to come, and it was because of its long policy of just dealing with the Indian and the fierce resentment of the men in the field that the Hudson's Bay was able to sustain its trade and to enforce peace

across the continent when the young Canadian nation failed miserably in its first attempts to govern the wilderness.

The first free traders, of course, were men acting individually, pecking at the borders of the once chartered land with a canoe load of trade goods. They did not have capital. Many of them were fly-by-nighters, eager only to make quick money. Their goods were far inferior and their very manner aroused the distrust of the Indians.

Those first daring adventurers who crossed the mountains to the Peace lasted only a season or two. It was not until the early '80's that a second attempt was made. An American group began trading on the Peace and after five years had made so little progress it offered to sell out for \$5,000. Henry J. Moberly, who entered the Hudson's Bay service in 1854 and who wrote an account of his experience only two years ago, said that a Hudson's Bay inspector decided against purchase. The rival outfit then went on down the Mackenzie, was the first free trader to reach it, and a year or two later sold out to the Company for \$53,000. Moberly said that in 1889 free traders were on Churchill River and at Ile à la Crosse, the very heart of the country to which the early Nor'Westers penetrated more than a century earlier.

Competition increased, of course. Companies were organized and spread across Canada. The small trader went everywhere, except to remote regions. But the Company maintained its prestige. It did not cheapen its goods. It stuck to the old method of trade, and to a marvelous extent it retained the loyalty of the Indians. The old spirit of allegiance and devotion survived as did the feeling that the Company was still the rightful possessor of the land. There is something very fine about that spirit and that feeling. The world has witnessed its like so seldom.

We have one vivid picture of it in the present century. Vilhjalmur Stefansson's record as an Arctic explorer has overshadowed his quality of keen and understanding observation of human beings. In his "Hunters of the Great North," wherein he describes a trip down the Mackenzie River in 1906, he encountered Roderick Macfarlane, one of the last of the old chief factors, a man who made valuable scientific contributions, especially to Smithsonian Institution publications. Stefansson wrote:

"As interesting as the scholarly Macfarlane was John Anderson, who under the title of 'Chief Trader of the Mackenzie District' was in effect viceroy over a northern empire. Although younger in years, Anderson belonged to an older school of thought. He had come as a boy from north of Scotland directly into the Company's service. This was in the days when the Company had not as yet traded away for money and for other valuable considerations the right which they once had actually to govern Canada, administering justice and having even the power of life and death, not only over their employees but over any one who penetrated the country with or without their consent. Even after these ancient powers of the Hudson's Bay Company had been surrendered, the tradition of exercising them still prevailed and Anderson could never quite understand that any one had a right to enter the north country without the consent of the Company. I learned later that his attitude towards all he met there was that of a generous and hospitable host, who, nevertheless, was much on his dignity, ready to consider it an affront if anything was done without his knowledge and approval. He knew his legal rights of overlordship had been curtailed but he simply could not bring himself to realize it.

"I made the journey with Anderson from Winnipeg to Edmonton. In both cities and on the way between, his hospitality was so insistent as to be embarrassing. When once we passed beyond Edmonton this changed like the switching on of a light of another color and he became more penurious than can readily be imagined. This was another of his traits which caused much misunderstanding and ill feeling but which a few of us understood and sympathized with. South of Edmonton he was a private person, spending his own money as he liked; north of Edmonton he was a servant of the Company, viceroy, indeed, of a vast empire, but handling only supplies which belonged to the Company and not to him. Nearly every Hudson's Bay man had that feeling of trusteeship which makes it unthinkable to let anything go to waste that belongs to the Company. But few if any carried it to such extremes as Anderson." <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> From *Hunters of The Great North*, by Vilhjalmur Stefansson, Copyright, 1922, by Harcourt, Brace and Company, Inc.

It is refreshing and enlightening, this glimpse of that fine integrity of spirit which animated the Hudson's Bay service, but it has brought us into the present century. The Hudson's Bay Company is today a huge concern. Edward Ellice, testifying in 1857, said it then had interests outside the fur trade, and those interests have grown amazingly. In addition to the £300,000 paid by Canada upon relinquishment of its charter, it received one square mile in each twenty from Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains and from the international boundary to the North Saskatchewan, in all of what is now the great fertile area of Canada.

It probably has more trading posts than ever before. It owns steamships, is engaged in commercial fishing. It retains oil and mineral rights in the land it sells. It operates a chain of large department stores across Canada. It is a huge and wealthy and intricate Company.

And as such it ceases to have a part in our story. We have been concerned in tracing the career of an organization with a single purpose. We began with Radisson, with gallant conquest and a high spirit of true adventure, with the fascinating romance of the unknown, with the drama of those who were first. We have followed Kelsey and Hendry and Hearne. We have gloried in the swift conquest of the radiant Nor'Westers, have thrilled to their understandable belligerence, and we have realized what they bequeathed to the Hudson's Bay Company.

We might go on with astonishing stories of the present. The airplane, the gas boat, the radio and the white trapper have transformed the north. Far down the Mackenzie, even in midwinter, you will find bobbed-haired Indian girls in silk stockings, high-heeled shoes, short skirts and jazzy garters. The radio shrieks from trapper's cabin and trading post. The tractor snorts across portages. The outboard motor rattles up lonely rivers. The airplane carries the mail.

Perhaps there is a thrill in what is happening in the north today. We admit the unique courage of the aviator and the immeasurable benefit to mankind for which the internal combustion motor is responsible. In this volume, however, we have become accustomed to a slower tempo and to a valor that does not flare brilliantly but glows steadily through the years. We may marvel

to think that a swift plane brings fur from the headwaters of the Liard and the Pelly to catch the best market prices, but we recall that it wings its way above the terrible road over which Robert Campbell and his men toiled and starved. Lurching, snorting tractors haul goods across portages that once caused an incredible expenditure of sheer brute energy, and we should be glad.

We might even exult with the suddenly enriched Eskimo who travels by plane, pays \$300 a ton for coal to save the trouble of burning blubber and buys \$15,000 gas schooners. We should rejoice that the Indian is able to purchase an outboard motor and that his squaw may sit in a factory-built canoe in comfort instead of wielding a paddle.

But a Hudson's Bay post with a gas filling station! With shiny new motors racked beneath steel traps in the trade shop! With spark plugs and spare parts lying beside bolts of strouds and duffle on the shelves! Imagine a puffing locomotive leading a string of wheat-laden cars into Fort Churchill, whence Hearne started on his journey. A thriving city on the spot where Chief Chatique plundered the Frobishers and Alexander Henry and Peter Pond! It is another story, and it should be told elsewhere. It does not fit here. We have seen too much of sheer grit and hardihood to be attuned to the flash of modern accomplishment. We have spent too much time with sturdy Scotchmen, whose faith was like the great Laurentian shield across which they plodded, to catch step with new-fledged methods.

And the Syrians and the Jews! In the north! It is incomprehensible, and it is true. By train and steamship and gas boat, they have flooded the north which the indomitable Mackenzie found and which the unswerving Thompson surveyed. Somehow we have always associated that bleak, far land with the Scot and the French Canadian, the one leading, the other singing as he toiled. They are as inseparable from that desolate realm as the spruce and the rock-rimmed lake. But their day is done. The modern young clerk, informed by radio of the latest fur prices and the latest wise cracks, contends with the sons of the desert for pelts caught by Indians who owe a dozen traders and whose wives order silk stockings from mail order houses in eastern Canada.

"The Lords of the Lakes and the Forests" have passed away.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

Any one wishing to dip further into the story of the Hudson's Bay Company will find a vast amount of material available. The student will discover a wonderfully rich and absorbing field.

In this volume an attempt has been made merely to get a true perspective of a series of events which, in the past, have been the subject of astonishing bias, misconception and bitterness. Legends and myths have clouded the story, and it is the hope of the writer that some of these have been dispelled, that the real origin of the Company's greatness will be better understood, and that something of its marvelous spirit of loyalty will be preserved.

It is a rather astonishing fact that in all that has been printed about the Hudson's Bay Company, no serious effort has been made to write a scholarly history of the organization which began two and a half centuries ago and which today not only forms a connecting link with the past but has played so large a part in the history of the American continent. But several reasons exist for our lack of an accurate and comprehensive work.

Until very recently the Hudson's Bay Company itself gave no heed to its accumulated store of material. Journals, minutes of meetings, correspondence, accounts, all these piled up in the Company's vaults for more than two centuries. They were uncatalogued, unsorted, practically unknown. Nor were all the records in London vaults. In many posts scattered across Canada valuable documents lay in chests or on shelves. Much was lost through carelessness. It has even been hinted that some were destroyed.

Until the end of the nineteenth century no one seemed to care particularly about getting at the truth of the story. Histories of nations, of sections of nations or of periods, encyclopedias, books on allied subjects, all accepted the usual version. Even today this practice is common and in the last few years authoritative



writers on subjects touching exploration, the fur trade or economic development have unquestioningly copied the old versions.

That policy of secrecy which has always been an inherent feature in the fur trade is another suppressing factor. From the beginning of the North West Company movement to the present, men of education have taken an active part. Their journals and letters and books have given us a large store of valuable and interesting material but they rarely told it all. After union the very integrity of the spirit developed served to hide the record. Even when some of these men did write, they evaded matters of importance.

But one of the chief reasons why we have had no comprehensive and scholarly work on the entire life of the Hudson's Bay Company is the monumental nature of the task. Even were all the records available, years of time and a great many volumes would be necessary. It is doubtful if such a history ever will be written.

And yet, so vast is the subject, so intimately is the story of the Hudson's Bay connected with that of Canada, it is astonishing that so small an amount of careful work has been done. Only in recent years has much valuable material been added to the slender store, and it is hoped that this laborious task will be pressed.

Of all the scholarly efforts, "The North West Company," by Dr. Gordon C. Davidson, published by the University of California in 1816, stands in front. It represents an enormous amount of research, is coldly exact and most comprehensive. It is the only complete history of the North West Company ever written and, while of great value to the student, it is strictly scientific and, as such, necessarily ignores the spirit and the romance of the period.

An important section of the Nor'Westers' story has been done with satisfying thoroughness by J. N. Wallace in "Wintering Partners on Peace River," published in 1929. It has been used in the present volume as chief authority on the sequence of events in the final struggle between the two companies in that important district. Mr. Wallace has made several valuable contributions to historical and other societies and, with R. Douglas, has trans-

lated and edited N. Jeremie's "Twenty Years at York Factory," a picture of the period when the French ruled in Hudson Bay.

A number of journals of North West and Hudson's Bay men have been published recently, and generally they have been edited in an illuminating manner. Some have been printed in publications of the Canadian Archives, which contain a vast store of material for the student, and some by the Canadian Historical Review.

L. J. Burpee has been the most prolific of the modern Canadians and, like Wallace, has taken small sections and covered them thoroughly. His "Search for the Western Sea" is valuable to the student and of great interest to the general reader. "The Old Athabasca Trail" will give the general reader many romantic incidents in the fur trade taken from journals and books written by men who crossed the Rockies by that famous pass. In the transactions of the Royal Society of Canada and in the Canadian Archives publications, Burpee has edited several journals of great value and contributed several important papers. For the Champlain Society he edited the 1910 volume, "The Journal of La-rocque."

Publications of the Canadian Archives, of the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Historical Review and the Champlain Society are all most valuable. The Archives published the recently discovered journal of Henry Kelsey.

H. B. Tyrrell of the Dominion Geological Survey, through his explorations and surveys in Canada, has been particularly fitted to edit old material. His David Thompson narrative and his editing of Samuel Hearne's journey, both published by the Champlain Society, are most important and of great interest to the general reader.

In the United States much painstaking work has been done on the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies in Oregon and Washington. This subject has been only referred to in the present volume but it is a story of absorbing interest for the student and the general reader. Dr. John McLoughlin was the big hero of that period and has been covered by H. V. Holman. Katharine Judson has unearthed much of the Hudson's Bay story and has contributed a number of important works. T. C. Elliot is an au-

thority on David Thompson and Peter Skene Ogden west of the Rockies and has made valuable researches for the Oregon and Washington Historical Societies. The publications of these two associations contain much new material. Two recent books of value are George W. Fuller's "The Inland Empire of the Pacific Northwest" and R. C. Clark's "History of the Willamette Valley, Oregon." Bancroft's "History of the Northwest Coast" in two volumes contains much Hudson's Bay material but more recent investigations have uncovered errors.

Middle western states have also contributed and publications of the historical societies of Wisconsin, Minnesota and North Dakota offer much material. W. E. Stevens' "The Northwest Fur Trade" published by the University of Illinois is a most valuable work that touches much of the early North West Company days. It is noteworthy that a great deal of the important research work on the Canadian fur trade and allied subjects has been done in the United States.

Going back a generation, we find the most interesting material and the first serious work on fur trade history. Leading in this was Elliott Coues, an American, who accomplished the monumental task of editing the journals of David Thompson and Alexander Henry the Younger, printed in three volumes. Henry's journal is a most revealing document. James Bain edited the "Travels" of Alexander Henry the Elder, which no one interested in the fur trade should miss.

It was in this period that the first complete accounts of the Hudson's Bay Company appeared. Dr. George Bryce was given access to the Company's archives in London, he had lived for many years in Winnipeg, knew a large number of old fur traders, and in 1900 was published what stands today as the best account of the "Adventurers," his "Remarkable History of the Hudson's Bay Company." He was the first to unearth the last years of Radisson's life and many other facts. At the same time Beckles Willson's "The Great Company" appeared. He, too, contributed new material, having had access to the Company's records, but his prejudices are so evident much of the book ceases to be of value. A few years later Agnes C. Laut wrote "The Conquest of the Great Northwest." She obtained from the Company's records

many new facts. Her prejudices are most evident, especially in the story of the Nor'Westers. It must be remembered, in considering these three books, which are the only complete histories of the Company that have been attempted, that much new material has been unearthed since their publication.

Fifteen or sixteen years ago Isaac Cowie, who entered the service before relinquishment of the charter, wrote "The Company of Adventurers," an account of his own years as a fur trader. Cowie not only describes the methods of the Company but explains much of the history of a trying period. It was due to him, too, that the minutes of council from 1830 to 1843 were preserved and published by the North Dakota Historical Society and in the Canadian Archives.

Another modern book by an employee is "The Men of the Hudson's Bay Company" by N. M. J. McKenzie, a little paper-covered volume published in 1920 on the two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of the signing of the charter. This book, and that of Cowie, are our best sources on comparatively recent times.

In 1929 appeared "When Fur Was King," by Henry J. Moberly and W. B. Cameron. Moberly was born in 1835 and entered the service of the Company in 1854. While depending on memory, he gives much information and many interesting pictures.

Going back into the nineteenth century we find accounts of travelers and of employees of the North West and Hudson's Bay Companies. These are valuable, nearly all interesting. Some are gems. The list is long, and some of the books, published a century and a half ago, can be found only in larger libraries. Hearne's book is classic as is Sir Alexander Mackenzie's. Two biographies of Mackenzie have recently appeared, "Mackenzie and his Voyages," by A. P. Woolacott, and "Mackenzie of Canada," by M. S. Wade.

By all means, the journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, the Vermonter who served both companies, should be read. Edward Umfreville wrote of the days long before union but his bias is most evident. Ross Cox and Alexander Ross contributed much and Gabriel Franchère is an authority on the Astoria days. Sir George Simpson wrote an interesting account of his journey around the world. Peter Skene Ogden wrote but did not sign an

account of western Indians. Malcolm McLeod edited Alexander McDonald's journal of a canoe voyage across the continent with Simpson that contains much valuable material. Paul Kane, an artist; John McDougall, a missionary; H. Y. Hind, a government explorer; Sir George Back and Sir John Franklin of the Arctic expeditions, and many others wrote of their experiences in fur land.

The classic in North West Company history is Senator L. R. Masson's "*Les Bourgeois du Nord-Ouest*" in two volumes. He gives an account of the early history and progress of the Company in French, while in English he publishes many journals and letters of old Nor'Westers, including the reminiscences of Roderick Mackenzie. Some of the most charming and instructive of old Nor'Westers' writings are included.

Much material has been printed on the North West Company, from the impassioned denunciations of Dugas to the Nor'Westers' own anonymous pieces of propaganda, "A Narrative of Occurrences in the Indian Countries of North America" and "The Origin and Progress of the North West Company of Canada, and a history of the fur trade." The other side of the picture is Selkirk's "A Sketch of the British Fur trade in North America, with Observations relative to the North West Company of Montreal," which is bitterly hostile. In all such material the student, and the general reader, must carefully examine the source of the material.

Except for recent scholarly efforts, the same holds true of nearly everything written about the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies. Fierce prejudices, bigotry and a refusal to delve for facts characterizes so much that has been published. Authorities of no value have been worn threadbare. Few writers had a direct contact with the fur trade or any knowledge of conditions in the wilderness or of Indian peoples. Few have had discrimination in selecting the sources of their statements. The student who goes into the subject deeply will be amazed and bewildered, and finally incensed, by much that he finds.

A good example of such a source is "Notes of Twenty-five Years of Service" by John McLean, who rose to be a chief trader. It was published in 1849. He wrote well and his two volumes contain much of interest and value. But his bias is most evident and

the discerning reader suspects it may have been caused because he was not promoted to be a chief factor. The author of this volume found an old copy of McLean's work in the Provincial Library in Victoria, B. C., which had been annotated, and on the last flyleaf was the following, written and signed by Alexander C. Anderson, who spent a lifetime in the service:

"As regards the remarks generally of the author upon the HBC and the system pursued in the Indian country, I shall make no comment on them. There is no one who has traveled through the country who could not contradict most of the statements made. The animus that inspired the whole is obvious; and one might appeal triumphantly to the impartial testimony of the missionaries—Wesleyan, Presbyterian and Catholic—who have visited the Company's posts, especially on the Pacific side of the mountains, for a satisfactory refutation. I have always had a high respect for the author, with whom indeed I have been in correspondence until very recently; and I feel assured that on reconsideration he would at this day wish much of what has evidently been written under feeling of anger and disappointment, were unwritten. As regards his individual affairs with the company, I will only say that he was considered in the wrong by all his colleagues in the country who were cognizant of the circumstances—myself among the number.

"For myself, I never fell in with the work before, but I know that it was generally received by those in the country much in the spirit of the remarks I have made."

The reader cannot have Anderson's knowledge of conditions but he should keep his comments in mind in reading anything about the Hudson's Bay Company. They explain so much that has been written.

It is a striking fact that a great deal of the important material dealing with the story of the Hudson's Bay Company has been unearthed in the last thirty-five years, and much of real significance in the last decade or so. When Dr. George Bryce was granted access to the archives of the Company he was not permitted to go forward of 1821, the date of union. Beckles Willson gave nothing of importance after that time. Miss Laut unearthed the Ogden journals but few facts relative to events after union.

It is said that Dr. Frederick Merk of Harvard was permitted in 1921 privileges never before granted, but he did not make public the results of his work and, it is said, he may not have been permitted to do so. R. C. Clark, author of "History of the Willamette Valley, Oregon," wrote that he was permitted by the Company to read through, but not to copy or make notes on, a typewritten copy of the manuscript documents made by Dr. Merk. In 1914 Katharine Judson was permitted to see certain records up to 1847.

Charles V. Sale, who resigned as governor of the Company in 1931, displayed an interest in Hudson's Bay history which his predecessors evidently did not have. He announced in June, 1928, that many documents were being taken from Canada and added to the Company archives and that all were being classified. He also employed some one to write a comprehensive history of the organization but, after two years, when little progress had been made, a new plan was adopted. This was the publication in a series of volumes of records, letters, minutes and journals taken from the archives. The first three volumes were announced for publication in 1931 but had not appeared when this book was written.

In his 1928 announcement Governor Sale said: "We are continually receiving inquiries regarding events prior to 1870, and have long felt it a duty to make our information available to the people of Canada. . . . In undertaking this publication we shall not only satisfy an oft-expressed desire, but shall also do justice to the memory of our predecessors in the Company."

This is a most important step. The traditional secrecy of the Hudson's Bay Company is partly responsible for adverse writing about it. It has so much to be proud of that has been buried, and has been proud of so much that is merely legend, it could only benefit by the whole truth.







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